

PRIMARY
PLATFORM OF METHODISM;
OR,
EXPOSITION
OF THE
GENERAL RULES.

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T O T H E R E A D E R.

THE comments, or expositions, of the General Rules, found in this volume, first appeared in the Nashville Christian Advocate, to which the Author then held an editorial relation. They were, originally, designed as merely introductory to general expositions of Methodism, which it was his purpose to present through the same medium. The work, however, grew in magnitude and interest, on his hands, as he advanced; and, before it was completed, he found that his *introduction* had grown considerably beyond the dimensions he had assigned to his whole work.

When but part of the numbers had appeared, some eight or ten of the Annual Conferences, officially, requested their publication, in book form, by the publishing establishment of the Southern Methodist Church. This measure not having been deemed advisable by those to whom the request was addressed, and the calls—official and unofficial—still continuing to be made for the work, the Author, after long delay, has consented to another medium of publication.

Had the work now to be re-written, with a view of making a book, a method considerably different from the present would be adopted; and, perhaps, a style, also, at least, in some parts; but, all things considered, it was judged better, to let the matter appear in the book very nearly the same as it did in the paper. Indeed, with one or two exceptions, the *Numbers*, as they appeared in the weekly paper, constitute the *Chapters*, as they now appear in the book—the advantages to be gained by a better arrangement of the matter, not being considered an adequate compensation for the additional labor. Such as it is, the work is presented to the reader, with no higher claim than that of an humble, earnest attempt, to discover, restore, and enforce, a faithful observance of the “ancient land-marks” of Methodist Christianity.

Whether the Author’s original purpose will be carried into effect, and this volume be succeeded by others, in exposition of other great features of Methodism, may depend, in a good degree, on the reception with which this *pioneer* of the proposed series may meet.

M. M. H.

Nashville, September, 1851.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

WHEN, in the providence of God, it seemed to become necessary, for the Messrs. Wesley to make some special provision for the harmony, discipline, and edification, of the hundreds of souls who had been brought, through their instrumentality, to seek salvation, they wisely collected, and arranged into a short, plain code, of Christian duty, the elementary precepts of the Gospel—excluding doctrinal dogmas, and speculative divinity, entirely. In organizing those “babes” into a household; those “lambs” into a flock; they confined themselves to the divinity of the *heart* and the *life*; of *experience* and *practice*; after the model of Christ, in his Sermon on the Mount. For this course, there existed excellent reasons; and such as, in their circumstances, had peculiar force. The Societies which they had formed, and for which these Rules were designed⁴ as a bond of union, generally belonged to the National Church of England, which had a doctrinal code in her “Thirty-Nine Articles.” Besides, as the prime object was, the improvement of the

hearts and lives of the members, the platform was made so broad, that all who were aiming at this one cardinal object, in sincerity of heart, might occupy a place on it; while, on the other hand, none could be admitted into the Society, however pure, or orthodox their creed, who did not profess an earnest "desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins." The Wesleys were desirous to do good to all, without respect to doctrinal tenets, who earnestly sought salvation by faith, through grace; well knowing, that doctrinal affinities would, early enough, develope themselves. There was no duplicity in this; for, though the Wesleys were decidedly Arminian in doctrine, the Church to which they, and their societies, held relation, was divided, in opinion, on this very point; and many of the sharpest doctrinal controversies of that time, were *within* the pale of that Church; and, therefore, applicants for membership in the Society, could not, very well, be questioned as to which side of the controversy, in the Church, they adhered. But, moreover, the doctrinal views of the Wesleys were well understood, before the publication of these Rules. The "United Societies," for whose government they were designed, were first formed in the latter part of the year 1739—several years before the publication of the Rules under notice.

In the earlier part of the same year, a somewhat similar Society was formed at Bristol, (and other places) as the result of the joint labors, it would seem, of Messrs. Wesley and Whitefield; but, when Wesley and Whitefield separated, on the question of absolute predestination, the Society also separated on the same question.

These Rules, with remarkably few and slight modifications, have been respected as a Primary Platform, by the entire family of Wesleyan Methodists, for more than one hundred

years; and, however the several branches of this great denominational family have differed, in opinion, on questions of polity, and other matters, each branch, or sub-division, has taken its grand stand-point on these Rules, as common ground. They belong, alike, to all who have rallied under this banner. English Wesleyans, of the various types; Methodists of Canada—Wesleyan and Episcopal; Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States—North and South; Protestant Methodists, &c.; all claim the *General Rules* as an *heir-loom*, descended to them from a common spiritual father. The existence of this *tenancy in common*—this *coparceny* in the property of our *Platform*—is a source of satisfaction to the writer, in the prosecution of his task. It enables him to feel, that he is uttering the sentiments, and advocating the claims, not of a single sect, but of a great family of Christian Churches; divided, indeed, in the details of polity, but cordially harmonizing in all that concerns the religion of the heart and of the life; and harmonizing as well with the teachings and the spirit of the Gospel as with each other. And, besides, there is a further satisfaction, in feeling assured, that this summary moral code is as cordially received by all evangelical Christians, of whatever name, as it is by the different Methodist organizations. It is true, that the first, or introductory part of this summary, is devoted to prudential regulations, peculiar to Methodists, which, in the liberty and discretionary power allowed to Christians, we regard it our gospel right to adopt, for the better carrying into effect of the practical duties therein required. These, though in accordance with the teachings of God's Word, are not explicitly required by it; and, therefore, Christians of other Churches are at perfect liberty to receive or reject them. But, the other three

grand divisions of the *General Rules*—“**AVOIDING EVIL**,” “**DOING GOOD**,” and “**ATTENDING UPON ALL THE ORDINANCES OF GOD**”—with the specifications of duty under each division, are so explicitly taught by the Word and Spirit of God, that it may be doubted whether any devout Christian, or sincere seeker of salvation, can be found to oppose them, or whose enlightened conscience will sanction their neglect.

We speak, of course, of the *Rules* themselves, as compiled by Mr. Wesley—copied, in chief, from the Word of God—and not of any construction herein given of them. With regard to some of the Author’s expositions, it is to be expected, that fault will be found by honest Christians holding different views; and this right is cheerfully accorded to them. This dissent he expects, chiefly on the *Terms of Membership*, the rule on *Slavery*, and some minor matters not directly embraced in the *Rules*. With regard to the first, the writer is most thoroughly convinced, that the original condition of admission to membership in the “United Societies”—“*A desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from sin*”—is the true condition of membership in a Christian Church; and that this opinion is according to the Word of God, the standards of the leading Protestant Churches, and, especially, to the uniform teachings of Methodism, he trusts, is made clear, in this work. Being very solicitous, to elicit the truth, fully, on this subject, he did prepare, in addition to what appears in this work, another chapter, of considerable length, more fully defending the views herein stated; but meeting no recent indications of the spread of the opposite opinion, and finding no Methodist writer, of name, in its advocacy, it was deemed advisable, not to occupy more space, with that topic, than was strictly necessary.

With regard to the rule on the subject of "Buying and Selling Men, Women, and Children," the temper of the times may not bear, patiently, in certain quarters, the exposition here given of the origin and design of this *interpolated* rule; yet, it is believed, that no other construction than that given, can be made to harmonize with the settled facts of history, the consistency of Church action, and the reason of the case. It was the sole object of the writer, to follow truth, in this inquiry; and, though, on this point, she has, in some particulars, led him whither he would not, honesty has compelled him to follow her to the conclusions herein recorded. If those conclusions can be shown to be incorrect, they will be promptly renounced; but, until this shall be done, he must occupy his present position.

The other points alluded to, are not judged to be of sufficient importance to demand any special notice here.

If, as we have seen, these Rules have been uniformly received by all sections of Methodism; if, on them, they have all taken their primary standpoint, they have all, at the same time, attached a corresponding importance to them, making them, next to the naked Word of God, the foundation of their respective Church organizations. It is made the duty of those having charge of circuits, to read these Rules "once a year, in every large congregation, and once a quarter, in every society." So important are they deemed, that the minister is required to read them in the congregation, that the public may understand the ground which we occupy. And, as these are the rules by which the members are to regulate their daily walk, once in three months the pastor is required to read the Rules in each society, and to explain, and earnestly enforce, their observance on the members.

This estimate of the moral value of the General Rules, is, evidently, not too high; for, while we never find a barren, or dead Christian, among those who are constant, and faithful, in attendance on the duties here enjoined, among those who are neglectful of them, we never find a fruitful and living one. It is, too, most painfully manifest, that the Methodist Church is suffering very much in the religious enjoyment of her membership, and in her reputation for purity, by a too general neglect of these rules of holy living. In every place, we hear complaint, that members habitually neglect the means of grace; and, in many instances, trample on the rules, by direct and open acts of violation. How many theatre-going members are hanging, as dead weights, on the Church! How many have danced away their last "desire to flee from the wrath to come," and would not deny themselves the indulgence, though it should *behead* John, or crucify the cause of Christ! How many have so intoxicated the heart, and bewildered the understanding, by poring, day and night, over poisonous novels, and unnatural romance, that they are disqualified, as well for the rational enjoyments of earth, as for the consolations of religion, or the blisses of heaven! And all this takes place among people who have solemnly subscribed to these very stringent rules of holy living. Were these rules suitably familiarized to the minds, impressed on the hearts, and enforced on the lives, of our members, if we should not have so numerous a membership, we should, at least, have a much more pure and spiritual Church.

Impressed with these convictions, the Author of this work undertook to write a plain, practical exposition of the General Rules, hoping, by this means, to call attention, and quicken the interest, of both preachers and members, in the

subject. A large number of Annual Conferences, entertaining, probably, the same views, officially requested the publication of these expositions, in a permanent form. To these official requests were added, the individual solicitations of a number of ministers of the first rank, North and South. And, indeed, ministers of other denominations, have requested the publication, especially that part which treats of the subject of *Amusements*. After a delay of more than two years, it has been determined to put the work into the hands of efficient publishers, who feel a deep interest in the *moral success* of the enterprize.

Assuming that the work, itself, is calculated to do good, at a point where much, very much, just now, needs to be done, it will rest, in a great measure, with the preachers, to determine the extent to which it shall accomplish the object contemplated. They can secure for it an extensive circulation, and a general reading among the members; and, unless it can be widely circulated, and generally and carefully read, it were better that it should never see the light at all; for, a failure in an attempt to call back our membership to first principles, and to correct existing errors and abuses, which threaten the vital interests of the Church, must tend to the strengthening and perpetuity of the evils the attempt would remedy.

We have, evidently, reached a point—a crisis—where, if the peculiarities of Methodism, in which our fathers gloried, are to be maintained, and transmitted, pure, to posterity, they must be fully and fairly explained, and defended, to the satisfaction of reasonable men and Christians. If they are not susceptible of such explanation and defence, we should know that fact, and at once renounce them. But, if that which our fathers loved, and defended, and conquered

by, is dear to us—their sons—then let us be “bold to take, and firm to sustain,” this defence, not only against outward foes, but against inward enemies of the heart, which long for enlargement from the bondage of self-denial and cross-bearing.

May the Great Shepherd of Israel bless this humble effort to promote his glory, in the quickening, building up, and comforting, of thousands of the lambs of His flock, is the fervent prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

Near Nashville, Tennessee, 1851.

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PRIMARY PLATFORM OF METHODISM.

CHAPTER I.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE "GENERAL RULES."

AS THAT "earnest" form of Christianity called Methodism, is, at this time, the object of both opposition and a spirit of innovation, we have determined to devote some attention to a plain and faithful exposition of its leading denominational peculiarities. And the "*General Rules*" having constituted the first conventional platform, on which the fathers and pioneers of Methodism were brought together, as an organized body of Christians; and as some of the strongest opposition to Methodism—internal as well as external—is directed against certain principles and practices set forth in their rules, they shall claim our first attention.

We begin by quoting the following very brief introduction, with which these rules were originally prefaced by the Messrs. Wesleys:—

"NATURE, DESIGN, AND GENERAL RULES, OF OUR UNITED SOCIETIES.—In the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley, in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day) that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together; which, from thenceforward, they did every week, namely, on *Thursday*, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them, (for their number increased daily,) he gave those advices, from time to time, which he judged most needful for them; and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities."

Methodism has, from the beginning, been, in a most striking manner, the child of Providence. ¹² Nearly all its peculiar characteristics were adopted, without any previous design, on the part of the instruments by whose agency it was brought into organized existence, as circumstances seemed to require, and without expectation of their becoming elements in a permanent ecclesiastical constitution.

The personal piety, and earnest longing after holiness, of Mr. Wesley and his early associates, attracted the attention of other inquirers after truth and purity, who sought aid from the counsel of those in whose wisdom and Christian experience they had strong confidence. As a matter of convenience, economy of time, and general improvement, the measure most natural and reasonable, under the circumstances, was adopted—that of agreeing that *all* should come together at one place, and at stated

periods, for purposes of religious instruction, rather than that such advice and comfort should be given to each separately.

But this society, formed in 1739, was not the first movement of the kind, though it appears to have been the first of a permanent character, and out of it grew some of the peculiar institutions of Methodism; and but for this measure, it may be doubted if any permanent organization in the nature of a religious society, had resulted from the labors of the Wesleys.

In 1729, a society, somewhat similar, was formed at Oxford, for mutual edification, which appears to have been dissolved when Mr. Wesley went to Georgia, in 1736. Another was formed in Savannah, Georgia, and met in Mr. Wesley's house, on the afternoon of Sunday; but was discontinued when Mr. Wesley left Georgia for England. In May, 1738, a third was formed in London, under care of Peter Boeler. Some of its members were connected with the Moravians, and some were the more immediate fruits of the labors of the Wesleys. A fourth society was organized in Bristol in the summer of 1739, which grew to a large number; and when Mr. Whitefield began to preach predestination, the society divided, some going with him, and others with Mr. Wesley. But that to which reference is made by the Messrs. Wesley, in the introduction to the General Rules, as the nucleus of the "United Societies," and subsequently of the whole Wesleyan Methodist Connection, was formed in the latter end of the year 1739. It is worthy of remark, that Mr. Wesley continued his membership in the society connected with the Moravians,

as well as with this one, until 1740, and was, at the same time, (and, indeed, through life,) a clergyman of the Church of England.

From this beginning, other societies grew up, and multiplied to such an extent, that Mr. Wesley could not attend, personally, to the religious instruction of all; and, after the example of Moses, when the concerns of Israel became too weighty and varied for his personal attention, he appointed judicious, God fearing men, to take charge of smaller sections, which came, without any particular design, to be called *Classes*.

In all this, Mr. Wesley appears to have acted upon no preconcerted plan, but only did what the circumstances in which he was placed, or the clear indications of Providence seemed to require. The wisdom, however, of obeying those leadings of Providence, is sufficiently clear from the results which followed. Mr. Whitefield neglected these organizing measures, and, in a great degree, the fruit of his astonishing labors died with himself; while, under the system pursued by Mr. Wesley, millions have been collected into the visible household of faith. Mr. Whitefield appears to have seen and regretted his error in this matter, when it was too late to remedy the evil; for, long after the efficacy of both plans of operation had been tested, he said to Mr. Pool, (as reported by Dr. Adam Clarke, from Mr. Pool himself,) "The souls that were awakened under Mr. Wesley's ministry, he joined in classes, and thus preserved the fruits of his labor. This I neglected, and my people are a *rope of sand*."

For about three and a half years, these societies appear to have acted only with a view of mutual edification, without any specific rules for their government, or for the reception or expulsion of members ; but such rules were so pressingly called for, by the circumstances of the infant, but rapidly growing societies, that, on the first of May, 1743, Messrs. John and Charles Wesley published the brief, but most excellent moral code contained in these General Rules, and they were cordially received by the “United Societies,” and are still retained as the great elementary moral code, by all divisions of the universal Methodist family.

It will be noticed, that these rules, like the Saviour’s Sermon on the Mount—which they resemble more, perhaps, than any other human production does, do not contain theological dogmas or doctrinal tests, but are practical and experimental in their character ; a principal reason for which may be found in the fact, that these societies were in membership with the national Church of England, whose doctrines they received, and whose ordinances they enjoyed, and therefore needed no separate Articles of Religion or Confession of Faith. Their object was not the formation of a Church, but the improvement in piety, and personal holiness, of those who were already Church members.

CHAPTER II

TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP.

Aggregate character of the Society—"A company of men having the form, and seeking the power of Godliness"—Individual qualifications of membership—"A desire to flee from the wrath to come"—Objection to admission of *seekers* answered.

THESE Rules were designed as a bond of union, and directory of moral and religious conduct, for societies organized for purposes of spiritual improvement, and existing, not independently, but chiefly within the Church of England. They were not intended to be either doctrinal or ecclesiastical, but practical and experimental; and, therefore, not likely, in their original relation, to call forth much objection, and especially as they are in strict accordance with the Word of God. But, when those societies grew up into a widely extended Christian Church, and the term of admission into the original societies was adopted as the condition of membership in an independent Christian denomination, the condition of communion was more severely scrutinized, and has called forth much opposition. But the controversy is not original with our Church; and, though long known in the general Church, it is now seldom mentioned, except in connection with the Methodist denomination. And as this term of admission has been, and is still, vehemently opposed in certain quarters, we think it proper to examine the merits of the question at some length.

The character of the organization, as such, and the required qualifications of admission to membership in it, are both here presented to view, so that each casts light on the other, and, together, render the object clear and intelligible.

The character and object of the association, considered collectively, are set forth in the following language: "Such a society is no other than a company of men, *having the form*, and *seeking the power*, of godliness, united, in order to *pray* together, to receive the word of *exhortation*, and to *watch over one another in love*, that they may *help each other to work out their salvation*." The elements of this description are: 1st. "A form of godliness," embracing outward obedience, and a blameless performance of Christian duty. 2nd. "*Seeking the power* of godliness;" implying an earnest, humble, persevering effort, to obtain an object of chief desire. 3rd. *Prayer* offered for each other, as well as each for himself. 4th. Mutual counsel, *exhortation*, encouragement. 5th. *Watchfulness*, not only each for himself, but "over each other, in love," and for good. 6th. The grand object being, to "help each other" in the great concern of "*working out their salvation*."

This description of a Church organization, well accords with that set forth in the Nineteenth Article of Faith of the Church of England. "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of *faithful* men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered, according to Christ's ordinances, in all things that of necessity are requisite

to the same." "Faithful," here, is used in the sense of fidelity, honesty, sincerity, and not as indicating the measure of *faith*, confidence, or assurance, possessed. This *faithfulness* of disposition or spirit, and the proper use of the means and ordinances of grace, constitute the character of a true Church of Christ, as portrayed in the Article quoted, alike as in the General Rules.

The Presbyterian Confession of Faith (chap. xxv.) says: "The visible Church consists of all, throughout the world, that *profess the true religion*, together with their *children*." * * * "Unto this Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God." * * * "And particular Churches are more or less pure, as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them." Here the same general elements appear as in the preceding cases, only that less stress is laid on personal character, than in the others, and especially than in the General Rules. "All who *profess* the true religion, together with their *children*." A profession of the true religion (Christian religion—and not the Jewish or Mohammedan) entitles them to be members of the Church, without any specified requirement of *faithfulness*, as in the case of the Church of England, or possessing the *form* of godliness and *seeking the power*, as prescribed in the General Rules. But the word and ordinances are there administered, and the general object is the same as in the other instances.

From what has been stated, it cannot be truly said, that we place the object of Church organization on

less elevated ground than the other Churches, but rather the reverse. But, before we proceed to consider the personal qualifications of membership, let us inquire a little farther, with regard to the grand design of establishing a Church organization in the world, the better to enable us to understand the proper conditions and qualifications of individual membership.

Is that object to separate justified and accepted believers from others, as a class with whom all others are unworthy to fraternize? Or is it to afford all possible helps to such as truly desire to be of the spiritual household of God? The latter, to be sure. To the Church triumphant in Heaven, truly belongs the first character, but not to the Church militant. Here, the whole body is composed of such as are still in danger and in conflict, and they have united themselves for purposes of mutual help, in "working out their salvation." Not because they are perfect in goodness, but because they desire to become so, and seek all available helps in the attainment of their object. They are weak, and their weakness—not their strength—impels them to unite for the securing of greater strength. They know that the strong enemy could easily break ten thousand attenuated fibres *separately*, but that those fibres, so frail in their individual weakness, become mighty in their united strength.

The Church is a *school*, designed to make men wise unto salvation, into which not only the wise and learned are admitted, but whose portals are freely open to those who feel the plague of their ignorance, and earnestly desire to gain true wisdom. It is a *fortress*, in a hostile region; not for a defence alone of the strong and

skilful, but no less for the weak and helpless seeking refuge and protection. It is a *household*, in which not only fathers and mothers, young men and maidens, enjoy privileges, but where infirmity, decrepitude, dependent childhood, and helpless infancy, find shelter and provision.

According with these views, are the terms or conditions of individual membership. "*There is only one condition PREVIOUSLY required of those who desire admission into these societies, 'a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.'*" This description, though brief, is full and comprehensive, embracing two general ideas:—

First. "A desire to flee from the wrath to come."

This implies: 1. A deep sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; for, without this, the sinner will have no real desire to *flee* from sin.

2. A just apprehension of the dangerous consequences of sin, as bringing "the wrath of God on the children of disobedience." He will not exert himself to escape that wrath, unless—in the language of Mr. Wesley—"He sees it continually hanging over him." In the state of mind here contemplated, he painfully realizes, that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness;" that indignation and wrath "shall be upon evil doers;" and that he is one of the "children of wrath," and, consequently, exposed to the terrible punishment due to sin.

3. This conviction awakens, alarms, and impels him to earnest exertion to escape it; "to *flee* from it;" implying a deep sense of danger and feeling of alarm.

The avenger of blood is pressing him hard, and he desires to *flee* with all his might, and all his speed, from the fearful peril. No sluggish desire, no tame effort, can answer to this living description of one flying from the open jaws of death. Herein is implied all of deep awakening and conviction, that comes from Sinai, and the thunderings of God's law. He feels his burden and his chains, and cries, "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me?" "Lord save, or I perish." Such is a desire to flee *from* wrath.

But, in fleeing *from* wrath, to whom—to what shall he flee? This is the next inquiry, in the natural order of the mind's operations, on this subject; and this constitutes the *second* part of the description of character and experience, as laid down in the rule above: "A desire to be *saved* from sin." A desire to *escape* wrath, and *obtain salvation*. This implies:—

1. *Sorrow for sin*; for one will not desire to be saved *from* sin, until he feels it such a plague that he heartily sorrows for having committed it.
2. *Hatred of sin*; for, while he loves it, he will not, he cannot, earnestly desire that his idol be slain.
3. *Turning from sin*; for the idea of cleaving to sin, is utterly at variance with the existence of a strong desire to be saved from it. Such a desire, deep infix'd, will lead him to cast away the accursed thing.
4. Such a desire to be saved from sin, implies a belief, or conviction of the mind, that such salvation is provided and **POSSIBLE**. Rational desire does not take hold on impossibilities; it can be

exercised only where the object is at least *probably* attainable. This desire, therefore, embraces a measure of faith in the atonement of Christ, as the only foundation of a sinner's hope of salvation from sin. It does not, to be sure, imply, necessarily, the exercise of *justifying faith*; yet, a measure of faith must precede and accompany repentance, as well as follow it; for, without such faith, the sinner will not receive God's denunciations of sin, nor, therefore, repent of it; and, without such a measure of faith accompanying repentance, as enables the penitent, in some degree, to *hope* in the mercy of God through Christ, repentance would, at once, degenerate into *despair*, which must paralyze all effort, and even all desire.

Now, this desire of salvation, comprehending, in its grasp, a full and complete salvation from sin, with all the degrees of faith and grace, may well accord with *any* particular degree of faith, from the lowest that can suffice for repentance, to the highest strength of a full assurance. This fixed, earnest desire, contains the living germ of all Christian faith and gracious blessings—most properly, therefore, such “*desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from sin*”—and not a specific degree of faith or assurance, is made the term of admission into the visible Church of Christ. The desire is of such strength as to embrace all that God has promised; but, as that may exist in connection with the various shades and progressive degrees of faith, the comprehensive, burning desire, and not a specified measure of faith produced by it, is made the standard of qualification.

Now, with the qualifications of individual membership before us, let us look back, again, on the character of the society, as aggregate described: "Having a form of *godliness*"—not of mere *morality*, but *godliness*—a course of blameless obedience and submission to the law of God, so far as man is capable of deciding on the moral quality of conduct. "And seeking the *power* of godliness." Longing for, inquiring, desiring, seeking it, as for hidden treasure. And laboring to "help each other to work out their salvation," by *exhortations*, by *prayers*, "by *watching* over each other in love." And then, "that it may be the more easily *discerned*, whether they are, *indeed*, working out their salvation," they are divided into smaller companies, which meet together often, to help each other forward in the way of salvation. Look, also, at the continuous evidence of the existence of such "a *desire* to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from sin," that is required by the rule. "Wherever this is *really* **FIXED** in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits." It is not a *feeble*, or a *transient* "desire;" nor one playing on the passions; but a "*real*," a "*fixed*" "*desire*"—a desire "*fixed in the soul*." And it is very justly premised, that where this truly is, it will produce fruit; and where no fruits of righteousness are yielded, it is fairly inferred, that no such "*real* desire is *fixed in the soul*." It may have struggled for existence in the soul; it may have been entertained there transiently; but it was not "*fixed*," planted, rooted, abidingly fastened there. In order, therefore, to determine, whether the desire be "*real*" or only apparent—whether it be "*fixed*,"

or but transient, fruit must be borne ; and the fruit required, is, "the avoiding of evil," "the doing of good," and "attendance on all the ordinances of God." Without such fruits, one is not permitted to "continue in these societies." And whosoever bears these fruits, has a right to a place in the Church of Christ.

A great clamor has been made against the Methodist Church, because, as it is said, it admits to membership mere *seekers* of salvation. Now, it happens that the term "seeker" does not occur in the General Rules ; but if it did, the best of us can justly claim no higher character than seekers of salvation. Even an Apostle "counted not himself to have attained" to the extent of his desire ; but that DESIRE prompted him "to leave the things that were behind, and press forward toward the mark for the prize."

But if our term of admission be rejected, it will, we apprehend, be no very easy matter to fix on one that can be well defined and appropriate.

If we are wrong, what, then, is the true standard of qualification ? The more general response is, "Believers, and they only, are entitled to membership in the Church of Christ." Very well ; but what must they *believe*, in order to secure to themselves the title of *believers* ? Here we get into confusion : one sect says, "You must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of men." This is right ; but this can only save from general infidelity ; and this alone, leaves the heart and conduct uninfluenced. Another says, it is "Repentance, whereby we forsake sin ; and Faith, whereby we steadfastly believe the

promises of God made to us in baptism." What those *promises* are, that we are to believe, is an entirely unsettled point among the Churches at large; and, therefore, a most uncertain criterion to guide in so important a matter. Another Church says, it is to "Profess the true (Christian) religion, and submission to the laws of Christ." But does this "profession" imply a belief in its truth, simply, or a profession that you have *assurance* of its comforts in your hearts? Not the latter, for this is not *required*, and scarcely *admitted*, by those subscribing the above rule; and not the former alone, for this comprehends too little. Something indeterminate and undefined, between the two, seems to be intended; but so darkly shadowed forth, as to form no rule of certainty to be relied on.

Finally, a new type Methodist approaches the subject, determined to free the General Rules from the objections of adverse parties, and heroically resolving to surrender men, arms, and munitions, to save the fortress; he declares, that, to be a believer, is to have "saving faith;" and that a desire to flee from the wrath to come, &c., is such saving faith. This is, in a sense, *true*, yet not very definitive. Every measure of faith, is *saving* faith, in some degree. The devil has faith that saves him from Atheism—for he believes there is one God—but it does not save him from the condition of a devil. A belief in the truth of God's Book, saves a man from infidelity, but not from sin. The "saving faith" in question, however, is evidently intended to mean more than this—to imply a faith that secures the spiritual and eternal salvation of its subject. With so much understood, then, what must be the strength

of faith, and how much ground must it cover, to entitle its possessor to the character of a *believer*, and, consequently, to the privileges of the Church? Must he believe that Christ redeemed him, and is willing to save him? Thousands believe all this, who have no desire at all to be saved from their sins. Must he believe that Christ is willing to save him *now*? This is not *true*, unless he now truly repents, and earnestly desires to be saved from his sins; and if he do thus repent, and desire to be saved from sin, yet, his humbling views of his sinfulness and demerits, may hinder him from believing the consoling truth. Therefore, not being a believer to this extent, he is not allowed access to the Church of Christ. And if he fully, trustingly, believes, that God, for Christ's sake, *has* pardoned his sins, he is, to be sure, eligible to membership, under the rules of the different Churches; yet, not one of them has made this state of assurance the standard of qualification for admission to the Church. And this most properly, too; for the amount of testimony and comfort that would impart assurance to the heart of one man, might leave his equally sincere, but more timid and doubting brother, still unassured.

We come back, therefore, to our own conditions of membership, as the only tangible, practical, and well defined one to be fixed on, and the best agreeing with the Word of God, and the usage of the Church in all ages.

CHAPTER III.

TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP—CONTINUED.

Those entitled to claim the promises have a right to membership—

Those promises shown to be for the contrite—Repentance the original condition of admission—Usages of the primitive Church in agreement with our rule—Modern Churches the same—This is the uniform doctrine of Methodists of every class.

WE think it safe to assume, that the man who is authorized to claim the gracious promises of God, is a suitable person to enjoy the benefits and privileges of the Church of God. And this we take to be the principle upon which the General Rules proceed. There is not, in the Book of God, a single gracious promise to the impenitent sinner, as such, nor a single threatening against the truly penitent. To the sincere penitent, “desirous to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from sin,” all the promises of grace and divine succor are as pointedly directed; as to the most matured saint or deeply experienced Christian. Take a few examples. “The Lord is *nigh* unto them that are of a *broken heart*, and *saveth* such as be of a *contrite spirit*.” Psa. xxxiv. 18. “The sacrifices of God are a *broken spirit*; a *broken and contrite heart*, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Psa. li. 17. “The Lord healeth the *broken in heart*, and bindeth up their wounds.” Ps. cxlvii. 3. “Thus saith the Lord, I dwell with him that is of a *contrite* and *humble* spirit, to revive the spirit of the *humble*, and to revive the heart of the *contrite ones*.”

Isa. lvii. 15. "The Lord hath sent me to bind up the *broken hearted*." Isa. lxi. 1. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a *contrite* spirit, and that *trembleth* at my word." Isa. lxvi. 2. "The Lord hath sent me to comfort all that mourn." Isa. lxi. 2. "I will turn their mourning into joy; I will *comfort* them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow." Jer. xxxi. 13. Sincere contrition, or penitence, is the lowest state of grace; that is, the state in which the heart first yields to gracious influences, willing to be led by them; and, at this point, the promises of God meet the sinner, and come to his help. In the passages quoted, God says, he is "nigh" to such, "will not despise them," "saveth them," "dwells with them to revive them," &c. Now, can it be fairly supposed, that those to whom God speaks thus encouragingly, are unfit for the society of his people?

These promises are made to those who are contrite, broken-hearted, on account of sin; and such contrition, we understand, to be an element of gospel repentance, but not the sum of it. Repentance, however, we understand to be fully comprehended in the condition of membership we are now considering; and this repentance is the grand condition of gospel grace and blessing. When John opened his ministry, he preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt. iii. 1. And he required his hearers to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Matt. iii. 8. Here we have repentance, and the fruits of repentance, the same conditions that are prescribed in the General Rules.

And "Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt. iv. 17

Both Christ and his forerunner preached repentance ; and both enforced the duty, by the consideration, that “ the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” That is, the kingdom of Christ—the true Gospel *Church*—is about to be established in the world ; therefore, repent. But why repent on this account ? That you may be prepared to enter that kingdom—that Church—repentance being the key by which the door of that kingdom is opened. Again ; Christ himself declares, that his mission was, “ To call sinners to repentance.” Mark ii. 17 And it “ behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached.” Luke xxvi. 46-7. When the disciples were sent out by Christ, “ they preached that men should repent.” Mark vi. 12. So, on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to the multitude, “ Repent, and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.” Acts ii. 38. John opened his ministry by preaching repentance ; Christ did the same ; his disciples preached on the same theme ; and when the gospel dispensation was fully ushered in, on the day of Pentecost, repentance was still the burden of the Apostles’ preaching. And when the gracious power of the gospel passed out, beyond the narrow limits of Jewry, and wrought its effects on Gentile hearts, the rejoicing of the saints was, that “ God had also to the Gentiles granted *repentance unto life.*” Acts xi. 13.

Why did Christ upbraid the cities in which most of his mighty works were done ? “ Because they *repented not.*” Why did he declare, that it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of

judgment, than for those cities? Because, with the same advantages, "they would have repented long ago, in sack cloth and ashes." Why does he commend the men of Nineveh, as compared with those to whom he had preached? "Because they repented at the preaching of Jonah." At the very opening of the full gospel dispensation, this condition of admission into the Christian Church was proclaimed. Baptism is admitted to be the initiatory ordinance; and, on the day of Pentecost, Peter prescribed repentance as the only precedent condition of admission into the Church by baptism. "Repent, and be baptized." Repentance was the only condition required, before admission to the initiatory sacrament of baptism. Why did not Peter require them, *first*, to have their sins remitted, *then* repent, and, finally, to be baptized, according to the teaching of the present times? Either he had not heard of the new order of grace, or he was inclined to say, "the old is better."

Repentance was clearly the condition of admission to the Christian Church, at the very commencement of it; and we have not learned that Christ has instituted any new term, since the giving of the Holy Ghost.

Now, that the condition laid down in our General Rules, fully comprehends repentance, is indisputable. A real desire fixed in the soul, to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from sin, to possess the power of godliness, and to work out their salvation.

Again: Christ, at the opening of his Sermon on the Mount, began that divine discourse by uttering this beatitude: "Blessed are the *poor in spirit*; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To be "*poor in spirit*,"

is to feel and lament our spiritual poverty, and earnestly to desire the true riches ; in other words, to be truly penitent, and desirous to be saved from sin. Of such cases, what does Christ say ? That they are “blessed,” because “theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven.” Does this mean that they have a gracious title to the kingdom of glory ? Then, surely, they are entitled to a place in the Church ; which, it will not be contended, is more pure than heaven itself. Or, does it mean the kingdom of grace in the soul ? Then, can we debar from the Church, one, in whose heart the reign of grace is already established ? But, does it signify the visible kingdom of Christ on earth—the Church ? Then are such its proper members ; for theirs *is* that kingdom.

But Christ says unto those who are “heavy laden” with guilt, and “weary” of sin, “Come unto me, take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest to your souls.” Are those whom Christ regarded as proper persons to come *to him* and find *rest*, unfit to come into his Church ? Is his militant Church more pure than its Head ? or more select than he, in the character of those it will receive ? And how are they to “come to Christ,” but in the means and ordinances of grace, which he has entrusted to the hands of the Church, to be dispensed to those who are desirous to flee from wrath, and come unto him ?

The usage of the Christian Church, in the primitive ages, is to the like effect. Lord King, in his “Primitive Church,” (p. 99) quotes from Cyprian—“All those that were baptized were looked upon as members of the Church, and had a right to all the privileges

thereof;" "except," adds Lord King, "they had been guilty of gross and scandalous sins," in which case they were expelled, "and not admitted again, till, by *penitence* and holy deportment, they had testified their grief and sorrow for their unholy and irregular actions." These remarks apply specially to those baptized in infancy; and we see that, when *they* sinned openly, *penitence* and *fruits of penitence*—"holy deportment"—were the conditions of restoration to the fellowship of the Church. When adults applied for admission into the Church, they were first put under instruction as *catechumens*; and when, in that character, "they had evinced the *sincerity* of their *hearts* by the *sanctity* and *purity* of their *lives*, as Origen sayeth, "we initiate them into our *mysteries*." (Primitive Church, p. 101.) Justyn Martyr, one of the Fathers of the Church, says of such, that "when they had given good proofs of their *resolutions* to lead a pious, religious life, and had protested their *assent* and *consent* to all the Christian verities, they were *baptized*." Origen, another of the fathers, says, they were kept as *catechumens*, "that they might give demonstrations of the *reality* of their *intentions*, by the *change* of their *lives* and *holiness* of their *conversation*. Again he says, (Book iii., p. 142, &c.) that the Church did "inquire into their *lives* and *carriage*, to discern their *seriousness* in the profession of Christianity, and did require true *repentance* and *reformation of life*, and then we admit them to a participation of our *mysteries*."

Bishop Stillingfleet says, "If we require *positive evidences of grace* in every one to be admitted to *ordinances*, as the only thing giving right, for my part,

I see not how, with a safe and good conscience, ordinances can be administered by any. If *positive signs of grace* be required; a man's conscience cannot proceed upon any certainty, without *infallible* knowledge of another's spiritual state, which I suppose none will pretend to." (Irenicum, p. 164.) These remarks are part of an extended argument, employed to prove, that the primitive Church was constituted on the basis we have seen set forth in the General Rules. The same high authority says (p. 439): "The congregational men may despair of ever finding *positive signs of grace* in admission of Church members, in any law of Christ." Evidence to the same effect, as to the terms of admission into the Church during the first three centuries, might be multiplied indefinitely, but these may suffice.

The principal Protestant Churches of the present time hold the doctrine in question, with regard to admissions into the Church, if we do not greatly misunderstand their accredited standards. These Churches may be classed as Presbyterial and as Episcopal; and, as a sample of the first, we select the Presbyterian Church in the United States—a Church, supposed by many, to be strongly opposed to the condition of membership now under consideration.

In the "Confession of Faith," ch. xxx., p. 129, it is declared, that the officers of the Church have power "to shut the Kingdom of Heaven against the *impenitent*, and to *open it unto penitent sinners*." Again, ch. xv., p. 66, "There is no sin so great, that it *can* bring damnation upon those who *truly repent*." In the Larger Catechism, it is prescribed, that infants of *one*

believing parent, are entitled to receive the sacrament of baptism; and, by baptism, "the parties baptized, are solemnly admitted into the visible Church." (Confession of Faith, p. 287.)

These children, thus admitted to the Church, "are to be taught to read and repeat the Catechism, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer—to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And, when they come to years of discretion, *if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady*, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed, that it is their *duty* and *privilege* to come to the *Lord's Supper*."

It is here seen, that the Presbyterian Church admits to its communion, and to its highest sealing ordinances, those who have no higher claim than that of having been baptized in infancy—being "free from *scandal*, appearing *sober* and *steady*, and having sufficient *knowledge* to discern the Lord's body." Again: in the Larger Catechism, it is said, "One who *doubteth* his being in Christ—if he be duly affected with the apprehension of his want of it, and unfeignedly *desires* to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity—in such case, he is to bewail his unbelief, and labor to have his doubts resolved; and so doing, he *may*, and *ought*, to come to the Lord's Supper, that he may be further strengthened." (Confession of Faith, p. 293.) Here the *doubting penitent* is permitted, and even *required*, to participate in the highest sealing ordinance provided for the members of Christ's Church.

Again: in the form of excommunication, the Moderator says to the offender: "We declare you suspended from the sacraments of the Church, till you give satisfactory evidence of the *sincerity of your repentance.*" (Confession of Faith, p. 438.) "When the judicatory shall be satisfied, as to the reality of the *repentance* of any offender, he shall be permitted to profess his *repentance*, and be restored to the privileges of the Church; which restoration shall be declared to the *penitent*, in the presence of the Session," &c. (Confession of Faith, p. 438.) Here the offender is expelled, until he truly *repents*; and *repentance* is the only condition required, in order to his restoration; and the reclaimed and restored Church member is characterized as "*the penitent.*" All this is in most perfect harmony with the doctrine of our General Rules on this subject.

It is true, that, in case of unbaptized adults applying for membership, "they shall, in ordinary cases, after giving satisfaction, with respect to their knowledge and piety, make a public profession of their *faith*;" (Confession of Faith, p. 436) yet this *faith*, thus publicly professed, does not here define itself as implying a *positive assurance of pardon*; nor is such interpretation given to it by the Church judicatories; for, so far as we are informed, so much as this is never required by them, of candidates, as essential to membership. Indeed, the adopted terminology of that Church, avoids the language of strong assurance, and usually expresses this "profession of faith," by the less confident phrase, of having "obtained a *hope.*"

The Protestant Episcopal Church, we select, as a sample of the other class of Protestant Churches. The condition of admission into that Church, and the Church of England, are the same; and in both they are essentially the same with the Methodist Church—differing only in the details.

Infants are inducted into the Church by baptism—baptismal vows being taken by their sponsors in their behalf—and, on arriving at years of discretion, they are required to re-affirm their vows in their own persons. In those vows, they promise to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and not follow, or be led by them; to believe the “Apostles’ Creed,” and obediently keep the commandments of God. These, with baptism, and a form of reception, called “confirmation,” are the only required conditions of membership. In the baptismal prayer for adults, this petition occurs: “We call upon thee for these persons, that they, coming to thy holy baptism, may receive *remission of their sins*, by spiritual regeneration.” Herein it is assumed, that the person entering the Church by the door of baptism, is seeking “pardon and spiritual regeneration;” but that he has not yet attained assurance of that grace. Again: in the Catechism, we have the initiatory sacrament of baptism thus treated: “*Question.* What is required of persons to be baptized? *Answer.* *Repentance*, whereby they forsake sin; and *faith*, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament.”

The liturgy of the English Church, in the following passage, is to the like effect: “Dearly beloved

brethren, the Scripture moveth us, in sundry places, to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness, and that we should not dissemble, nor cloak them, before the face of Almighty God, our Heavenly Father; but confess them, with an humble, lowly, *penitent*, and *obedient* heart, to the end that we may obtain forgiveness of the same.” This admonition is addressed to the Church especially. The terms of admission to the Lord’s Supper—the higher sealing ordinance—are very clearly set forth, in the form of invitation, in the communion service: “Ye who do truly and earnestly *repent of your sins*, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and *intend to lead a new life*, following the commandments of God, and walking, from henceforth, in his holy ways; draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort.” Sincere and earnest repentance, a determination to lead a new life, obedience to the commands of God, and love and charity to man, are the conditions upon which admission is claimed to the highest privileges of the Church.

That the doctrine in question is a tenet of Methodism, has, we think, never, until recently, been called in question; and we have yet to find the first one of the old Methodist ministers, who withholds his assent from it. If such dissent is to be met with, it is probably confined to the younger ministers, and has been resorted to, to break the force of opposition, on the part of the other Churches, which treat it as an exceptionable peculiarity of Methodism. That it is not a regulation peculiar to our Church, is quite clear, from what has been said on this subject: but, though

not peculiar to our Church, it is, at least, a doctrine we rather glory in than deny.

We have already seen, that the first of the “United Societies,” instituted by Mr. Wesley, was reared on this platform; and this society became the nucleus, first, of the Wesleyan Methodist connection in Great Britain; then, of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. These General Rules were adopted, and respected, as of binding force in this country, from the first formation of Methodist societies. And when the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in the United States, in 1784, they were received as the law of the Church; and, of course, the condition of membership therein specified for the original “United Societies,” and afterwards for the American Methodist Societies, was retained as the condition of admission into the newly organized Church. To render this more clear and certain, we find, in several of the early editions of the Discipline—say from 1789 to 1796—the introduction to these Rules was omitted, and the language originally applying them to the “United Societies,” was so changed as to apply them, specifically, to the Methodist Episcopal Church; and, instead of reading, “Such a society is no other than a company of men,” &c., the reading is, “*Our society (Church) is no other than a company of men, having the form, and seeking the power, of godliness, united, to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.*”

This language our fathers used, to describe the character of the Methodist Episcopal Church; and

they add, with specific reference to the Church, that “there is but one *condition previously* required of those who desire admission—a *desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.*” This is full to the point, and clear beyond the possibility of mistake, if we allow the fathers of the Church to have understood the principles of their own organization. But this primary position is fully corroborated, by all the correlative elements of the system bearing on the same subject.

One corroborating fact is, that, while the above condition is definitely prescribed, and applied to the matter of membership in the Church, there is nothing in the Discipline that at all disagrees therewith.

A second fact, bearing in the same direction, is, that, while sincere repentance and obedience constitute the term of Church membership, there was provision made for a society *within* the Church, (we refer to the Bands) wherein *assurance of pardon* was required, in order to admission. There, the first question put to the candidate, was, “Have you forgiveness of sins?” And this was followed by four others, of equal import, or even stronger. Had it been intended to make the condition of membership in the Church, and in the Bands, the same, it is strange, that, in the first case, the conditions named in the General Rules should have been so strongly expressed, and in various forms of language; while, in the instance of Bands, a totally different condition is as clearly prescribed, and varied in at least five forms of interrogation, no one of which is comprised in the specified term of Church membership.

A third fact is, that, in the initiatory sacrament of baptism, the candidate is not required to declare himself in a justified relation to God, but promises to renounce the world, the flesh, and Satan; to believe the doctrines of the gospel, and faithfully to obey the commandments of God.

Fourthly. In inviting communicants to the Lord's Supper, the invitation, in our Church—as we have seen in the Protestant Episcopal Church—is not restricted to those professing a full assurance of pardon; but extended to those “who do truly *repent* of their sins, and are in love and fellowship with their neighbors, and *intend* to lead a new life, obeying the commandments of God,” &c.

And this principle obtains, prominently, in all the branches of the Methodist family, both in Europe and America. So the Methodist Protestant Church—which rejects the distinctive peculiarities of *Episcopal* Methodism—adopts the General Rules, commencing with the passage, “There is one only condition required of those who desire admission—a desire to *flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins.*” The same element is incorporated into the second Article of their Constitution: “There is only one condition required of those who apply for membership in the Protestant Methodist Church—a desire to *flee from the wrath to come, and be saved by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, with an avowed determination to walk in all the commandments of God blameless.*” And, in taking baptismal vows, the question is asked, “Are you now determined, by the aid of divine grace, to forsake

every evil way, to look to Christ as your only and all sufficient Saviour, and to walk in all the commandments of God?" Again: the invitation to the Lord's Supper, is given in the language quoted from the service of the Church of England, the Protestant Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church: "You who do truly and sincerely *repent* of your sins," &c.

A general Church organization was formed in 1826, by delegates from a number of secessions in different States, styled "The Methodist Societies." Their chapter on admitting members into the Church, is introduced by the quotation from the General Rules, stating that the society "is only a company of men, having the form, and seeking the power, of godliness," &c. And, in specifying the requisites of Church membership more fully, the other passage given already several times, is quoted: "There is but one condition required of those who desire *admission*," &c.; "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins;" and the avoiding of evil, doing good, and observance of gospel ordinances, are required as evidence of that *desire*. The same is true, in fact, if not precisely in form, of all the branches of the Methodist family, wherever found.

CHAPTER IV.

TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP—CONCLUDED.

Cause of the controversy, wrong views of the work of grace on the heart—Full assurance an impracticable condition, and required by no Church—Opinions of Fletcher and Wesley—A Methodist opposer of the doctrine, refuted by Wesley—Absurdity of the opposite theory shown in five particulars.

A CAUSE which has led to controversy on this subject, is, as we believe, the want of a right understanding of the work of grace on the heart, and a want of clear and just ideas attached to leading terms employed in relation to that work. There are many who seem to recognize no middle ground, between being under the Divine displeasure, and being assured of pardon. And “saving faith,” and being a “believer,” are employed to designate the spiritual condition entitling persons to membership in the Church; and reproach has been cast on us, because, *in terms*, we do not require either as such condition; while those terms are employed in senses so indeterminate and various, that they convey no distinct idea of the spiritual state. In the minds of some, those terms imply the evidence of justification; and, in this sense, they are generally understood by Methodists, when employed by them in connection with this subject. With others, they imply a state of penitence,

in which the soul is disposed to submit to God; and persons believed to be in such a state, are often told that they are true "believers;" that they have "saving faith," and are in a proper state to be received into the Church.

The fact is, that when a man possesses the qualities required in our General Rules, he is within the range and provision of gospel promises; and, in that state, is not a child of wrath, nor can he, without losing that state, be lost; and yet he may not have that trusting faith that saves from doubt, and assures him of pardon and acceptance. This state of sincere, humble, obedient, but doubting penitence, is sometimes of long duration, before the state of assurance is fully attained.

Now, in determining the point in the progress of gracious experience, at which persons are properly admissible to the Church, it is evident we must either, 1. Fix on the state of *full assurance*—but which state is not required by the Word of God, or by any Christian Church, as a condition of membership; and need not, therefore, be further considered here. Or, 2. On the point of penitent surrender, and fixed religious resolve, which brings the soul into an heirship of gospel promises—and which is the condition prescribed in the General Rules. Or, 3. We must fix on some definite point between these two stages of gracious experience. And this attempt has produced the great embarrassment in the case; for there is no such *definite point* there: it is the period of doubting, hoping, unassured penitence; and any attempt to define a point in that period of "neither darkness nor

light," that can be safely relied on as that at which the subject should be admitted to the Church, seems singularly unreasonable. The *beginning* and the *end* of this morning twilight, are well defined ; the first is bounded by darkness ; the second, by the clear light of assurance : but between them is only misty twilight, in the dimness of which "men are seen as trees walking."

Now, at what point in this contest between hope and fear, doubt and trust, darkness and light, does the penitent become a child of light, and entitled to a place with the people of God ? The subject himself cannot determine, for he is in doubt ; and his feelings will not indicate his true state ; for, often the hour of deepest darkness to his feelings, is just before the breaking forth of the sun. And it is a most perilous thing for friends, or sessions, to say to him—guided by the best indications in their reach—"Come not into the household of God, for you are a child of wrath, an unbeliever ;" when, for ought they can possibly know, he may be accepted of God : or, on the other hand, to say, "Peace, peace, thou hast saving faith, and art a child of God ;" when he may not have had the great deep of his heart fully broken up ; and, by such *human* assurances, may be induced to build his hope of salvation on a false and destructive basis.

The only safe and Scriptural mode of proceeding, therefore, seems to be, to receive him who appears to be earnestly desirous to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from his sins, not as a *son*, but a *servant* ; not because he has already attained assurance, but because he ardently desires it ; and, instead of giving

him a human assurance of pardon, teach him that God will, if he persevere aright, send forth the spirit of adoption “into his heart,” and he shall give the full assurance, short of which he must never rest satisfied; that his reception among the people of God indicates, not a specific measure of faith or grace in him, but only their confidence in his sincere desire to flee from the wrath to come, and their willingness to aid him in working out his salvation.

That this doctrine and practice is not only in accordance with the general teachings of Methodism, as it now is, but those of its founders, will appear quite clear, from the following quotations from the writings of Mr. Fletcher, and those of Mr. Wesley.

Mr. Fletcher says:—

“If it be urged, that the Spirit of God witnesses to all sincere seekers of the kingdom of God, that they are in a damnable state, till they feel the pardoning ‘love of God shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost given to them;’ I deny the fact; and assert, that the Divine Spirit can no more bear witness to an accepted mourning Cornelius, that he is *not accepted in any sense*, than it can give testimony to a palpable contradiction. The truth is, our unbelieving fears and awakened hearts, are very prone to surmise the worst, and we are very apt to take their surmisings for divine impressions, *even when we ‘bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.’* I doubt not but St. Paul himself, in his agony of penitential grief, when he spent three days and three nights in fasting and prayer, had many such gloomy thoughts; but they were certainly lying thoughts, as well as those which David wisely checks, in some of his psalms. Who will dare to say, that Ananias found the Apostle in a damnable state, though he found him without a *sense* of sin forgiven, as appears from the direction which he gave him: ‘Arise; why tarriest thou? Wash away thy sins, calling upon’ (and consequently believing in) ‘the name of the Lord’

“ My objector’s argument is as much levelled at St. Paul’s doctrine, as at my essay: ‘ Men and brethren,’ &c., said he to his audience, at Antioch, ‘ whosoever among you *feareth* God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.’” Acts xiii. 26. But none of the pious hearers whom he thus addressed, were unwise enough to reply: ‘ Thou acknowledgest that we *fear* God; and David says, ‘ Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.’ Now, if we fear him and are blessed, we are already in a state of salvation; and, therefore, need not this salvation which thou preachest.’ I demand proof, therefore, that men who fear God, in our day, are more ready to draw pernicious inferences from the doctrine of the dispensations, than they were in St. Paul’s time.

“ The objection which I answer, may, with equal propriety, be urged against St. Peter’s doctrine. Acts ii. 5; and x. 7, we read of ‘ *devout* men out of every nation under heaven,’ and of a ‘ *devout* soldier,’ that waited, continually, on Cornelius, who, himself, ‘ feared God, wrought righteousness, and was accepted—with all his house.’ By Acts xi. 9, 14, it evidently appears, that, though Cornelius was cleansed by God himself, yet he must send for Peter, who was to ‘ tell him words whereby he and all his house should be *saved*;’ that is, should become partakers of *the great salvation* revealed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But, although St. Peter began his discourse, by acknowledging that his pious hearers *were accepted with God*, none of the congregation said, ‘ Well, if we are accepted, we are already in a state of salvation; and, therefore, we need not hear words whereby we shall be *saved*.’ It is plain, from this account, that no preaching was ever attended with a more universal blessing—was so instrumental in conveying to all, the power of the faith of assurance, as that very sermon which the Apostle began, by intimating that his hearers were already accepted, according to an inferior dispensation. Hence, it is evident that the doctrine we maintain, if it be properly guarded, far from having a necessary tendency to lull people asleep, is admirably calculated to excite every *penitent to faith, prayer, and the perfecting of holiness.*” Checks, vol. i pp. 577–580.

Mr. Wesley remarks:—

“ Tuesday, December 1, (1767.) Being alone in the coach, I was considering several points of importance, and thus much appeared clear as the day:—

“ That a man may be saved, who cannot *express* himself properly concerning imputed righteousness. Therefore, to do this, is not necessary to salvation; that a man may be saved, who has not *clear conceptions* of it; (yea, that never *heard* the phrase;) therefore, *clear conceptions* of it are not necessary to salvation; yea, it is not necessary to salvation to *use* the phrase at all. That a pious Churchman, who has not *clear conceptions*, even of justification by faith, may be saved. Therefore, *clear conceptions*, even of this, are not necessary to salvation. That a Mystic, who *denies* justification by faith, (Mr. Law, for instance,) may be saved. If so, is it not high time for us

‘To throw aside big bombastic words,’

and return to the plain word, ‘He that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.’ (Vol iv. (Jour.) p. 269.

Again he says:—

“ But, what is the faith which is *properly saving*; which brings *eternal salvation to all those that keep it to the end*? It is such a divine conviction of God, and the things of God, as, even in its infant state, *enables every one that possesses it, to ‘fear God and work righteousness.’* And whosoever, in every nation, believes thus far, the Apostle declares, ‘is accepted of him.’ He actually is, *at that very moment*, in a state of *acceptance*. But he is, at present, only a *servant* of God, not properly a *son*. *Meantime*, let it be well remembered, that ‘*the wrath of God*’ no longer ‘*abideth on him*.’

“ Indeed, near fifty years ago, when the preachers, commonly called Methodists, began to preach that grand Scriptural doctrine, *salvation by faith*, they were not sufficiently apprised of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand, that, every one ‘who feareth God and worketh righteousness,’ is accepted of him. In consequence

of this, they were apt to make sad the hearts of those whom God had not made sad. For they frequently asked those who feared God, 'Do you know that your sins are forgiven?' And upon their answering, 'No,' immediately replied, 'Then you are *a* child of the devil.' No; that does not follow. It might have been said, (and it is all that can be said, with propriety,) 'Hitherto you are only a *servant*; you are not a *child* of God. You have already great reason to praise God, that he has called you to his honorable service. Fear not; continue crying to him, and you shall see greater things than these.' Vol. ii. (Sermons) pp. 385, 386.

And farther:—

"They whom God has chosen out of the world; namely, 'by sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth;' are set in *direct* opposition to those whom he hath not so chosen. Yet again; 'those who know not him that sent me,' saith the Lord; who know not God; they are of the world. Those, on the contrary, are of God, who love God, or, at least, 'fear him, and keep his commandments.' This is the lowest character of those that 'are of God;' who are not properly *sons*, but *servants*; who depart from evil, and study to do good, and walk in all his ordinances, because they have the fear of God in their hearts, and a sincere desire to please him. Fix in your hearts this plain meaning of the terms, 'the *world*.' those who do not thus fear God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: it means neither more nor less than this." Wesley's Works, (Sermon on "Friendship with the World,") vol. ii. p. 193.

Here we have the doctrines of the General Rules, and those we have herein laid down; and, indeed, they constitute a part of that system of evangelical theology, the preaching of which, by Mr. Wesley and his coadjutors, produced, under God, the great reformation which has, for an hundred years, been spreading abroad. That doctrine is, that the Spirit of God visits all hearts, convincing them of sin; when thus

convicted, the awakened sinner either resists that grace, and so becomes more hardened; or he begins to sorrow for his sins, and to yield to the gracious influence. In the latter case, here commences repentance unto life; and the penitent becomes heir to the promises of the gospel, begins to "fear God and (attempt to) work righteousness;" and he now possesses the character of a *servant*, though not properly a *child* of God, because he has not yet received the spirit of adoption, the witness of the spirit, or the faith of assurance. The interval between this first penitent yielding to the Spirit of God, and the full assurance of faith, may be very brief, or it may be protracted to weeks, months, or years. Now, in the instances in which this state is so protracted as to demand special treatment, what is to be done with this penitent? Is he to be treated as still an alien enemy, or to be regarded as a child of God? Neither the one nor the other.

At this point, Mr. Wesley, for a time, was greatly embarrassed. He and Mr. Fletcher were zealous advocates of the doctrine of assurance—the witness of the Spirit—and were quite at fault, in disposing of a subject upon whose spiritual state Christ has pronounced a blessing, but who was still *unassured*. This embarrassment was rather increased than relieved, by the fact, that some of the Churches at that day—as well as at this—and they, too, the Churches claiming to be more evangelical, held, that a soul is first *regenerated*, and afterwards is brought to *repentance*. According to this doctrine, *regeneration* is the first step in the way of personal salvation; and as *repentance*

is held, by this theory, as following after regeneration, whenever one gave evidence of genuine repentance, the *inference* was authorized by the premises, that he was regenerated, and so a child of God. So much was evident from the premises; but Messrs. Wesley and Fletcher could not be satisfied with mere *inferential* evidence of acceptance with God; and hence their difficulty in disposing of the case of the unassured penitent. The elementary theological truths pertaining to the subject, furnished a solution of the problem. Repentance was seen to be the starting point, both in gospel command and gospel promises, and must, therefore, precede regeneration; otherwise, there might be regenerated souls who were *impenitent*. And hence, too, what was looked on as an incontrovertible truism—that a man must be a child of God, or a child of the devil—was, by consequence, exploded; for they saw that the sincere penitent was under blessings, and not curses; that God rather smiled than frowned on him, though he was yet unassured; and that, in this state, he had ceased to be an enemy, and had become a *servant*, though not a *son* of God; that he was *accepted*, not rejected, though not adopted or assured by the witness of the Spirit; and that, consequently, whom God rejects not, but blesses with great and precious promises, the Church of Christ is bound to receive, and “gently lead” into the light of gospel assurance.

Had Mr. Wesley received the doctrine noticed above, that repentance is a subsequent of regeneration, he could not have consistently prescribed the term of Church membership he did; for it has its foundation

in the great elements of that system of theology which he received as divine. How absurd, then, is it, in a Methodist, to adopt the very theory on the subject of repentance and regeneration, the rejection of which, by Mr. Wesley, was the basis upon which he laid down the General Rule in question; and, especially, to attempt the support of that rule, by the doctrines of that antagonistic theology.

But, since *one* Methodist writer, at least, has espoused the doctrine, that regeneration goes before repentance, and that sincere penitence is saving faith, and has not only employed Calvinistic authorities to prove his position, but has attempted to fix the same doctrine on Mr. Wesley, it may be well for that venerated man to defend himself against the aspersion of one of his sons. That son, after stating his own opinions, and giving his Calvinistic authorities to the above effect, adds:—

“If any doubt of this fact remain: if any doubt remain, that Mr. Wesley’s mature and final judgment, as to the nature of the faith by which a sinner is justified, was entirely coincident with the other authorities, cited on the same subject, its last vestige must vanish before the ensuing testimony.”

And then gives one of the passages we have before inserted, as the evidence of Mr. Wesley’s agreement with him and his authorities. But the following language of Mr. Wesley, must set this matter right. He says, speaking of “present forgiveness—pardon of sins—“I believe the condition of this is faith, (Romans iv. 5, &c.,) I mean, not only that without faith we cannot be justified, but, also, that as soon as

any one has *true faith*, in that moment he is *justified*."

"It is allowed, also, that *repentance*, and fruits meet for repentance, *go before faith*. (Mark i. 15; Matthew iii. 8.) *Repentance* MUST ABSOLUTELY *go before faith*; fruits meet for it, if there be opportunity. By *repentance*, I mean *conviction* of sin, producing real desires, and sincere resolutions of amendment; and by fruits meet for *repentance*, forgiving our brother, (Matthew vi. 14, 15,) ceasing from evil, doing good, (Luke iii. 4, 9, &c.,) using the ordinances of God; and, in general, obeying him according to the measure of grace which we have received." (Matthew vii. 7; xxv. 29.) Wesley's Works, vol. v. p. 35. And in this state, according to the doctrines before quoted from Mr. Wesley, the penitent is "an accepted servant," though not an "adopted son."

But the correctness of the doctrine we are advocating, may be farther shown, from the absurdity and impracticability of the opposite one, which may be noticed in several particulars; among them these following:—

First. It assumes that the Church, which is designed to aid the children of men in the way to heaven, can admit to none of her ordinances, or peculiar privileges, the "humble and contrite ones" with whom God "delights to dwell;" but requires them to struggle without her direct aid, in their time of greatest extremity, until they can profess themselves in a regenerated state.

Second. It gives an advantage, in the matter of Church membership and gospel ordinances, to the

confident, if not even the hypocrite, over the more diffident and self-distrustful. The first named classes might make the required profession with little ground of assurance, or none at all; while the more humble, with better claims, would not be likely to make an equally strong profession.

Third. Under the appearance of elevating the standard of qualification for Church membership, its practical tendency is, to lower the standard of Christian experience. For, when a true penitent is seen earnestly struggling for deliverance, but not assured of pardon, the officers of the Church, and others, convinced of his sincerity, and sympathizing in his mental distress, are strongly inclined to afford relief, by offering him the privileges of the Church; but, as this cannot be done without a profession of saving faith, he is encouraged to lay hold on the weaker evidences of that state, and thus be able to claim a place in the Church. Accordingly, when the Church is willing to receive him, he feels authorized to infer his justified state. Whereas, when he is taught to believe, that the Church is the place in which the sincere penitent may *seek* assurance, as well as enjoy it, his admission there does not give him the endorsement of the Church—as in the other case—that he is already in a pardoned state.

And, in point of fact, we think it will be conceded, without much controversy, that the lesser evidences of a pardoned state are most readily admitted and relied on, in those Churches where a profession of saving faith is required as a condition of membership.

As evidence of this, we give a few of the quotations cited by the writer before alluded to, to overturn the doctrine of these Rules: “True faith does not give an *assurance* of our interest in Christ.” “The first time of receiving, or acting, saving grace, cannot, ordinarily, be known.” “*Assurance* is not the *ordinary* lot of true Christians, but only of a *few* of the strongest and most obedient. Those few that do attain to assurance, have it not constantly.” Yet, these writers would not receive one who earnestly “desires to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from sin,” though they allow the faith of constant assurance to no Christian.

Fourth. It rejects the only safe rule given us by Jesus Christ, by which to judge of Christian character—“By their fruits ye shall know them”—and substitutes one unsafe and unauthorized—that of simple profession. For, as the Church cannot see the heart, or discern the spirit, the only evidence that can be procured, is, the profession of the candidate; unless the growth of the fruits of righteousness be waited for, and one who professes justification, be kept from his Church privileges, until this evidence also be given.

Fifth. It institutes an impracticable condition; for it is the right and duty of the Church, to judge of the qualifications of candidates for admission to membership; and if certain evidence of a regenerated state be required, none but God can know the certainty of that state; and, as Stillingfleet most justly remarks, on this condition, the Church could never determine that any candidate is in the proper state for admission

into the Church. The fact, therefore, of requiring the candidate to be in a state which no one can *know* another to be in, is requiring an impossibility of the Church, as a term of membership.

Upon our plan—which we understand to be that of the gospel—the difficulties in question, are, as we believe, fully obviated. When candidates profess penitence, and a determination to seek salvation through Christ, bringing forth fruits of repentance, we invite them, in the name of Christ, to enter the outer courts of the Church, enjoy its nursing and instruction, that they may be aided in working out their salvation, and give satisfactory evidence of their sincerity. When they have given that evidence, by their conduct, that they are truly sincere and earnest in their determination to seek their salvation, we give them a cordial welcome to all the privileges and ordinances of the Church, and extend to them what aid we can, in the way of salvation, without authorizing them to infer hence, that they enjoy entire justification; but, rather, that we believe them, if they have not actually attained, to be truly seeking that grace.

CHAPTER V.

PROBATIONARY RELATION

Principle of probation practically acknowledged in every department of life—The analogy of Scripture usage to the same effect—This was the practice of the primitive Church—proof—It is virtually the usage of modern Churches—Qualifications for probationership—Rights and privileges of those on trial—Probationers not members of the Church—Primitive Church usage—Difference between probationers and members—How they may be dismissed—Requisites for advancement to membership.

ALTHOUGH the General Rules do not prescribe a probationary relation, that feature was early engrafted into the original system, as properly belonging to it, and necessary to the carrying out of its practical operations; and we therefore notice the relation in this connection.

The receiving members, *on trial*, into our Church, is a matter that has been much objected to by other Churches, and not unfrequently made a subject of ridicule; and we have, probably, not been as careful as duty required, to place this subject in its proper light before the public. That it is right and necessary, we shall endeavor to establish.

First. The principle of probation is one, the propriety of which has a practical acknowledgment in every department of life into which we may look.

If we would employ an agent, a workman, a teacher, or clerk, we are wont to take him *on trial*. For, if he even come fully avouched for, as possessing the required qualities, that avouchment, if good, is given as the result of a previous trial, in some form. But, we do not commit our interests and reputation to his hands, without a trial—a practical proof—of his ability and integrity, made under our own supervision, or on evidence that such trial has been made by others.

On admitting one to membership in the Church, we entrust to him, in some measure, the interests and reputation of the household of faith; and, surely, a step so important, demands as much prudence and circumspection as the temporary interests we so carefully guard, by requiring a *trial*, or practical proof of qualifications, before our full confidence can be given. It has been objected, that we require a service of probation of all, even such as profess assurance of faith, and such as have long been consistent Christians—but not of our communion—who are rightfully entitled to membership, unconditionally, and immediately. With regard to the first case, we reply, that a naked profession of assurance, as it may be the result of self-deception or of hypocrisy, is not the best evidence, nor such as the Church is authorized to rely on, when that of a more reliable character can be had, in addition, without injury to the candidate, and with better security to the Church. With regard to the other case, one who sustains a fair Christian character, in another Christian Church, on application to ours for admission, is received, at once, into full fellowship; because,

having passed a probation in another Church, whether with or without the name, we require not a second trial; just as a man, or company, would receive an agent, on evidence of his having been already tried. As to any who may profess to be religious, but connect not themselves with any branch of the Church, they are under the care and supervision of no recognized authority, are amenable to no body for their religious conduct, and their religious character cannot, therefore, be vouched for, by any body, that can be recognized by a Christian Church.

Another analogy, in point, is this: a foreigner immigrates to this country, and wishes to become a citizen; but, in order to secure this right, he is required, not only to give notice, according to the forms of law, of his intention, or wish, to that effect, but is required, also, to undergo a term of probation, extending to years. The immigrant was ready, at the first, to swear allegiance to the government, and profess the purity of his republican principles; but this is not sufficient, without a term of probation, in which he is expected to give practical proof of the soundness and sincerity of his professions. It is true, that a citizenship in Spain, for example, will not afford the immigrant any claim to civil rights here—as membership in another Church enables one to enter our Church without a probation—because the difference between the two governments, and the rights of citizenship under them, are so great, that qualification for the one, affords not even a presumption of suitability for the other. But, in the instance of the professor of religion connected with no Church, we

recover the analogy again; for, though the immigrant may come to the country, profess love for its government, and reside here many years, until he makes his declaration of a wish to become "naturalized," his probation for citizenship does not begin to run; because, whatever his professions or conduct, he has placed himself in no relation to the government, and, therefore, is to the government an *alien*; as the professor of religion is to the Church, who has applied for no affiliation to it.

Second. Christ has not authorized the Church, or its officers, to form a judgment of character, and, especially, in a matter so important, upon a mere profession of required qualities, on the part of the person applying for Church privileges; but has prescribed a safer and more practicable rule of judging and action: "By their fruits ye shall know them." How are we to know men thus, as to their qualification to become permanent members of the Church, unless time and opportunity be first given them to bring forth fruits? If we admit them, at once, to the full fellowship of the Church, upon naked professions of qualification, the fruit cannot be had, to guide the judgment of the Church in this important step; and when that fruit afterwards is seen, it may prove to be fruit of bitterness. But, then, the Church is already injured by the too hasty admission. And if we hold them entirely aloof from Church privileges, until satisfactory fruits of righteousness be borne, we may, in this way, discourage the heart of the humble and contrite ones, and drive from the fold the real lambs of Christ's flock. The proper medium seems, therefore,

to lie between these two modes of proceeding; and this ground we regard ourselves as occupying, when we admit the penitent to a state of trial, or candidacy for Church membership, and to the nursing care of the Church, and the strengthening means of grace; but admit him not to full fellowship, until, on proper trial, he is found to produce good fruits. And, indeed, it is difficult to conceive of a different course, without continual danger of bringing dishonor on the Church, by countenancing the presumptuous or hypocritical on the one hand, or of discouraging and promoting despondency, in the truly humble and sincere, on the other.

Third. The analogy of Scripture usage, gives countenance to this practice. Among the Jews, when persons came to them from pagan nations, while they believed in the true God, and kept the moral law, but, before they received the rites—or sacraments, if it be preferred—and submitted to the ceremonial law, they were called *proselytes of the gate*; but, after receiving these, they were called *proselytes of the covenant*. Some writers, however, assert—and among them Dr. Tomline, Dr. Lardner, and Dr. Jennings—that there was but one class of proselytes, properly; and that they retained that name only while they were undergoing a trial, or preparation, for full admission into the rights and privileges of the Jewish Church. But all agree in this: that, “when the proselyte was well *proved* and instructed, they gave him circumcision; and when his wound was healed, they gave him baptism;” and then he was permitted to eat of the passover, and join in the sacrifices and services of the

Lord's house. He did not enter upon his probation, until he had professed a desire to abandon his idolatry and wickedness, and be received among the faithful. When *well proved* and *instructed*, he was fully recognized as of the spiritual Israel. The Hebrew Church was the Church of God; the Christian is not another, but the same Church, under a better dispensation; and all the general reasons which rendered a *trial* of proselytes a necessary prudential regulation in the first, would call for a like provision in the Christian Church. And, indeed, we find it enjoined by Apostolic authority, in the New Testament, with regard to officers of the Church. In 1 Timothy iii. 10, Paul requires, that candidates for the deaconship "be first *proved*, then let them use the office of a deacon, *being found blameless.*" The propriety of this probation, with regard to the ministry, is generally acknowledged—perhaps universally—by the different Christian Churches; for we know not of any, who suddenly receive a new convert to the highest offices in the ministry; but, on the contrary, the member is required to be fully proved, before he is put into the ministry; he is then subjected to another trial, as a *licentiate*, or *novice*; and, when fully proved, advanced to the higher grades and full functions of the ministerial office.

Why this circumspection in regard to the ministry, if it be not also necessary in the instance of membership?

Fourth. Such was clearly the usage of the primitive Christian Church. None were admitted, from the world, to the full confidence and privileges of the

Church, without undergoing a service of probation, called *catechumenship*.* The strongest professions did not exempt them from this state of *trial*; because Christ had required the Church to judge of such by their fruits, and she could not adopt his rule of judgment, without giving time, in which to determine whether the fruits required were produced in their lives.

Eusebius records the case of a devout female—Herais—a disciple of Origen, who heroically suffered martyrdom for the honor of Christ; and yet she was a *catechumen*—a *probationer*—not having been admitted to the full fellowship of the Church. But, as Origen himself expresses it, she took her *baptism by fire*, and ascended to heaven. Ecc. His., p. 223.

A number, besides, are mentioned, who held the same relation, but went cheerfully to the stake.

With regard to this matter, Lord King says, “None, in those days, were hastily advanced to the higher forms of Christianity, but, according to their knowledge and merit, gradually arrived thereunto.” Prim. Ch., p. 100.

A reason assigned by Origen, for such a trial, is this: “We do our utmost, that our assemblies be composed of good and wise men.” Origen against Celsus, book iii. p. 143.

Lord King says, “Now, those who desired to be members of a Christian Church, were not presently advanced to that degree, but were first continued, a certain space of time, in the rank of *catechumens*,

* Gregory calls them “probationers,” as well as “catechumens.” Ch. His., p. 27.

or the catechised ones: these were candidates for Christianity, who were to stay some time in that order, for these two reasons: the one was, that they might be catechised, and instructed in the Christian Faith; and the other was, ‘that they might give demonstration of the reality of their intentions, by the change of their lives and holiness of their conversations.’’’ Prim. Ch., p. 101.

Nor are we to suppose, that this arrangement was merely intended to instruct converted pagans in the primary elements of Christianity, preparatory to their entrance into the Church; for, before they could be received as catechumens, Origen says, “They were first privately instructed at home, till they understood the more intelligible principles of Christianity, and then they were admitted into the first rank of catechumens.”

Bishop Stillingfleet, treating of this subject, says, “One great cause of the great flourishing of religion, in the primitive times, was, certainly, the strictness used by them, in their admission of members into Church societies, which is fully described by Origen, against Celsus, who tells us, they did ‘inquire into their lives and carriages, to discern their seriousness in the profession of Christianity, during their being catechumens,’ who after tells us, they did require ‘true repentance and reformation of life,’ and then we admit them to a participation of our mysteries.”’’ Irenicum, p. 161.

St. Ambrose says, “The catechumens were not forward in coming to baptism,” that is, were not hastily admitted into full membership.

Gregory, (in his Ecc. Hist., p. 55,) speaking of the duration of catechumenship, says, “The time which was appointed for penitence, was protracted, or extended, by the bishop, according to the marks of contrition which were distinguished in the penitent.”

The same principle obtained in the primitive Church, with regard to the ministry. Accordingly, Lord King says, “The Church, in those happy days, by such a long trial and experience, used all possible precaution and exactness, that none but fit and qualified men should be admitted into those sacred functions and orders.” (Prim. Ch., p. 85.)

We certainly have the example of the primitive Church, as authority for putting candidates for membership on a course of trial, before admitting to the full privileges of the Church. And, notwithstanding the condemnation of our Church, by others, on account of this regulation, we are compelled to regard it as according with the reason and propriety of the case, the usage of the Apostles, the practice of the primitive Christians, and a most valuable safeguard of the purity of the Church.

Fifth. And, indeed, we know of no religious society, in which the same principle does not exist, in some form, and to some extent.

In what relation, for example, do baptized children stand in the various Presbyterian and Episcopal Churches, if they be not probationers, or catechumens? To say they hold no relation to the Church, is to declare their baptism a nullity, or worse, a solemn farce; and to say they are members of those Churches, in virtue of their baptism alone, is contradicted by

their own Church actions ; for they do not admit them to the Eucharist, until they have passed through a certain course of instruction and trial, and have been formally admitted to the full fellowship of the Church. Consistency, therefore, demands, that they be regarded as probationers, or catechumens.

But, though other Churches should differ from us in this matter, though they should ordain, that the judgment of the session, or the relating of an experience, shall furnish the evidence of qualifications in a candidate for membership, we prefer to have these, with the practical evidence of sincerity and fruit-bearing, developed more fully, "by a course of searching probation ; and thus, with Mr. Wesley, "follow the Scriptures and the primitive Church."

Early in the history of our denomination, this practice was adopted ; experience taught us its value, and it is now part and parcel of our economy. The duration of a state of *trial* is not fixed in our Church, except its *minimum* period. At one time, it was a rule of the Church, that no one should be admitted to membership, without a probation of *two months* ; at another time, it was fixed at *three months* ; and, finally, in 1789, *six months* was settled on, as the shortest time of probation that should authorize the admittance of a candidate into the Church ; and that rule remains unchanged. We said, the duration of a candidate's trial, is not determined by the rule ; because, *that* only ordains, that he shall not be admitted in a shorter time ; that he shall not, at an earlier period, be eligible to membership ; but, if, at the end of that time, he shall not have given

sufficient evidence of his fitness to be received, it does not follow, that his relation must then end; but, unless he has given evidence of positive unfitness, he is continued on trial, and his case may, at any time afterward, be taken up and acted on; when he gives satisfactory evidence of his fitness to be received, he is admitted into the Church; or, if his conduct be bad, or if the case continues *fruitless*, he is discontinued.

This may be a proper place to meet several questions connected with the subject, and very frequently propounded:—

First. What qualifications are required of those who wish to enter as probationers for membership?

The general answer is, “A desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins.” Such a desire is to be evidenced, not only by a declaration of it but chiefly by a deep concern manifested in the conduct and manner. But, as such a desire may be counterfeited by the designing, or may be very transient with the irresolute and unstable, we demand such farther evidence as can be afforded, in this incipient stage of experience. Hence, our rule on that point says: “Let none be admitted *on trial*, except they are *well recommended* by one you know, or until they have met *twice or thrice in class*.” A minister, therefore, has no legal authority to admit a person “on trial,” unless that person be “well recommended” by one he knows, or has passed several examinations in class, affording an opportunity to form an estimate of his sincerity and earnestness. No

doubt serious evils have resulted from the neglect, or violation, of this rule. Preachers have not only failed to demand the required vouchers for fitness, but, in their zeal, have even urged persons to commence a probation, who, had the rule been observed, could not have been received. We award due credit to such, for their zeal ; but, in view of the general bad effects of such a course, would affectionately remind them, that their work is “not to *mend* our rules, but to *keep* them.” The observance of this admonition of our Discipline, would, we are sure, prevent many wounds to the cause of God, and no little scandal to the Church. Such a latitude has been taken, in some instances, that the impression has been made, in places, that it is the *right* of any one who chooses, to join the Church on trial. The course of duty is plainly marked. When persons apply to be received on trial, the officiating minister should take their names ; and if the necessary recommendation be furnished, or if his personal knowledge of the applicant supply the place of it, or, in the absence of both, if the applicant give the necessary satisfaction, by several class examinations, then, but not till then, should his name, and the date of his admission, be entered on the list, or record, of probationers, which the preacher should always keep, separately, from the record of members ; but, if that evidence be not forthcoming, it is not the duty, nor is it the *right*, of the minister, to enter the name as a probationer.

Second. What are the rights and privileges of probationers ; and wherein do they differ from those of *members* ?

Some have gone so far as to assert, that probationers *are* members of the Church already; and deeply do we regret, that the line of distinction between them has become too dim, and, in some cases, well nigh obliterated. And, among the instances of this sort, may be mentioned the fact, that many preachers, in their annual returns, report all their probationers as members of the Church, when, in truth, they are but candidates for membership. This tends to confusion, and to the destruction of the ends contemplated by this excellent arrangement of our economy. Our British brethren have not departed from the old landmarks, in this particular; but report their members and probationers separately.

This is another point, upon which, as there existed a strong disposition to depart from primitive usage, the General Conference, of 1848, called on Rev. Dr. Dixon for a statement of the practice of the parent body—the British Wesleyan Conference—and the following is his answer: “We do not report probationers as members. They are kept on trial three months.* We have a schedule, in which we have a column for the names of persons on trial. They remain there for a quarter of a year; and when our numbers are taken, as, for instance, at our March quarter, we have, sometimes, from fifteen to twenty thousand reported on trial. When they are admitted on trial, they are reported; but not in the public minutes, only on the quarterly schedule.”

* Their term of probation is but three months—what ours formerly was—and the difference in circumstances, may make a shorter term than ours entirely expedient.

The distinction is very clearly marked in the Discipline; the very law which fixed our present term of probation, is in these words, "No person shall be owned as a *member of our Church*, without six months' trial." And the law prescribing the manner in which probationers are to be admitted into full connection, says, "Let none be received *into the Church*," until the prescribed conditions are complied with; one of which conditions is, having been "six months on trial."

So scrupulously did the primitive Church preserve the distinction between members and probationers—catechumens—that it was matter of reproachful complaint with *Tertullian*, against the "heretics;" that "they made no difference between the faithful (members) and the *catechumens*." And Lord King adds, "But the true Church distinguished, and permitted not the catechumens to enjoy the privileges of the faithful, till they had, in a sense, merited them; which was, when, through a considerable time of *trial*, they had evidenced the sincerity of their hearts, by the sanctity and purity of their lives." (Prim. Ch., p. 101.) It has been urged, and may be admitted, that, in receiving converts from idolatrous religions, more time and care were properly devoted to the instruction of catechumens, than is necessary in admitting to Church membership, persons who have been educated in the principles of Christianity; yet, this would not obviate the necessity of a probation, (answering, in general, to catechumenship,) nor destroy the distinction between probationers and members; for, we see, on the authority of *Origen*, *Tertullian*,

Stillingfleet, Lord King, and a host beside, that the chief object was, to prove their sincerity, and give time for the producing of fruits of righteousness. This branch of the necessity is now quite as strong as then; for, persons, abandoning a false religion, are, generally, even more ready to submit their whole hearts to the requirements of the true, than those who have been reared under its teachings. Yet, the fact, that the other branch of the original necessity for the relation, is greatly weakened, might very reasonably suggest the propriety of diminishing, proportionally, the distinction in privilege, between probationers and actual members of the Church. And, accordingly, our Church have done so—our probationers being allowed much larger privileges of the Church, than those in the primitive Church, under different circumstances. They, after having been first instructed at home, were admitted as catechumens of the class called “*edicti*,” who were permitted “to come into the Church, where they stood in a place by themselves, and were present at the sermons which were adapted to their capacities.” (*Origen.*) “If they behaved well in this rank, then they were advanced to the ‘superior rank of the *perfecti*,’ as Tertullian calls them; who stayed, not only at the lessons and sermons, but also at the prayers, which were the conclusion of the first service.” (*Prim. Ch.*, p. 100.)

The privileges of our probationers are of a higher order; they are placed under the same pastoral care with the members of the Church, and enjoy, with them, the right of attending all our religious meetings; they are enrolled as probationers, and are placed as

members of classes, the privilege of which, as also of love feasts, they freely enjoy. It is true, that they are not, according to rule, entitled to what is technically called a love-feast "*ticket*;" for such a ticket is the right only of a member, and is an evidence of membership; but they are entitled to "*notes*," which serve the like purpose. ("Give *tickets* to none," till they have completed their probation; "give *notes* to none," unless recommended as prescribed for persons in becoming probationers.) Thus do they enjoy the nursing care of the Church, and are aided in all that is calculated to make them fruitful in works of righteousness.

On the other hand, in matters calling for the votes, or other official action of the Church members proper, they have no right to participate. And, in case of behaving in an immoral or disorderly manner, they are not entitled to the forms of a regular Church trial; but their relation, or trial, is simply discontinued, and their names erased from the list of probationers. But it is inquired, doubtfully, "Is such truly the spirit and design of our rule? If so, is it not unjust, or oppressive, in its operation?" Such a doubt must imply an opinion, that persons on trial are actually Church members, which is not the case. And if you try, and convict, such an one, you cannot excommunicate him from the Church, because he is not in it.

Now, there is another point of difference between members and probationers, which tends to explain and vindicate the one under notice. Obligations must be reciprocal, between the Church and its members, to

be just. A government owes no obligations to the man who acknowledges none to the government. The Church-member, in becoming such, took upon himself grave and important obligations; and, in accepting him, the Church assumed answerable obligations to him. Thus, in order to obtain membership, he was required: 1st. To undergo a period of trial and instruction. 2nd. To conduct himself in such a manner, as to secure the recommendation of the leader, under whose special care he had been for at least six months. 3rd. To have gained the confidence of the administrative authority of the Church where he resided. 4th. To profess, before the Society, his belief in the doctrines of the Church. 5th. To declare his willingness to observe the rules of the Church; and, (if he were an unbaptized adult,) 6th. To take upon him baptismal vows, and receive that sacrament. After passing this ordeal, the Church publicly acknowledged him as a member, and came under all the obligations to him, that legitimately grow out of that relation. One of these is, that he shall not be excluded from the Church, without a fair trial, by the society of which he is a member, or a select portion of them, and an appeal. And this is a constitutional guaranty to him, in virtue of his having submitted to all the prerequisites and obligations of membership. Very different from this, is the position of the probationer: he is not required, in that relation, to subscribe our articles of faith, approve our rules of discipline, nor to submit to any of those distinctive obligations of membership. Shall he, then, who has come under no obligations to the Church,

other than the constructive one, not to dishonor her, by behaving unworthily during his candidacy, or trial —shall he be placed on common ground with the man who has entered into solemn covenant bonds to the Church? This were inequitable.

How, then, is he to be dismissed from his relation to the Church?" If he walk disorderly, he is passed out by the door at which he came in. The pastor, upon the evidence and recommendation required in the Discipline, entered his name, as a candidate, or probationer, for membership, and placed him in a class for religious training and improvement: now, if his conduct be contrary to the gospel, or, in the language of our rule, if he "walk disorderly, and will not be reproved," it is the duty of the pastor who received him, to discontinue him; to erase his name from the class book and probationers' list. This is not to be done rashly, or on suspicion, or slight evidence of misconduct. It is made the duty of his leader, to report weekly to the pastor, "any that walk disorderly, and will not be reproved." This implies, that the leader, on discovering an impropriety in his conduct, first conversed privately with him, and, on finding that he had done wrong, attempted to administer suitable reproof, that he might be recovered. Had he received reproof, this had been the end of the matter; but, he "would not be reproved"—would not submit to reproof—and the leader, therefore, reports the case to the pastor. But, it is evidently the design, that, after this first failure, on the part of the leader, farther efforts should be made by the pastor; for, the rule, after providing that such conduct

shall be made known to the pastor, adds, "We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But, then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us." The pastor, on consultation with the leader, (and others, when convenient,) in country societies, or, with the leader's meeting, where there is one, determines on the proper course, and carries the determination into effect. Here is a just correspondence between rights and duties.

Our rule and practice, as it regards preachers, shed light on this subject. The Discipline, of 1784, says: "Observe: taking on "trial," is entirely different from admitting a preacher. One on trial may be either admitted or rejected, without doing him any wrong; otherwise, it would be no trial at all." And that explanatory remark, or note, still remains in force. A preacher, on probation for admission into the itinerant connection, has no right to vote in Conference, or to perform any act pertaining to members of Conference, as such. Nor has he right to a regular trial, by the Conference, as members have; but, if found unsuitable during his probation, or, at the end of it, he is simply discontinued, by the body by which he was admitted on trial. And, in case of immoral or unchristian conduct, the Conference dissolves his relation to that body, as a probationer, and he drops into the hands of an inferior judicatory, (a quarterly Conference) to be tried on the accusations, implicating his moral or Christian character.

The reason and consistency of the case, requires, that there should be a correspondence between the

rights of probationership for the ministry, and for membership.

Third. What qualifications should probationers possess, in order to be entitled to full membership in the Church?

Some have supposed, that the terms of membership we have before stated, are applicable to *probationers*, but not to *members*. A general answer to this position, is found in the fact, that persons on trial are no where spoken of as members of the Church; and, therefore, facts or arguments concerning terms of membership, cannot apply to probationers, distinctively.

If, however, we examine this question in the light of primitive usage, we shall find the matter stated, with satisfactory plainness, with regard to *catechumens*. An object in holding them in that state, Origen says, was, “to discern their *seriousness* in the profession of Christianity,” (and, of course, they were kept in that state, until the object was attained;) that they required of them “true *repentance*, and *reformation of life* ;” and when the evidence of these was satisfactorily given, by their walk, “then we admit them to a participation in our *mysteries*.” Justin Martyr expresses it thus: “A profession of faith in the truths of the gospel, and *answerable life* to the gospel.” According to Tertullian, as quoted before, they were to remain in that state, until they “gave demonstration of the reality of their *intentions*, by the *change of their lives, and holiness of their conversation*.” And so, again, Origen: “We initiate them into our *mysteries*, when they have made a proficiency

in holiness, and, according to the utmost of their power, have *reformed their conversations.*" Lord King says, they were continued in that state, "until they had evidenced the *sincerity* of their hearts, by the sanctity and purity of their *lives.*" These statements appear quite explicit, and to be in accordance with our General Rules.

Considering the subject, as set forth in our rules and usages, we remark, that the general object of a state of trial, is, to afford time and opportunity to probationers, to evidence the sincerity and fixedness of their "desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins," by bearing fruit, as described in our General Rules; "by doing no harm," "by doing good," and by "attending on all the ordinances of God." If these fruits appear, and are borne consistently, we are bound to consider them as fit subjects for the fellowship of the Church; for, by their *fruits*—not their professions chiefly—ye shall know them. But, that they may bear fruits unto holiness, besides the general means of grace, they are placed, during their probation, in classes, with experienced Christians, and under the special care of a pious leader, whose duty it is to meet them weekly, instruct them in the things of God, "inquire how their souls prosper," &c. For six months, they are required to undergo this searching examination into their walk, spiritual condition, and growth in grace. At the end of that time, if the leader, who has had so fair an opportunity of knowing their conduct and spirit, believe them sincere and faithful, and can testify to their consistent Christian

conduct, they may be admitted to a public examination, as stated before, in the presence of the Church. If, in this, they give satisfaction, and (if it have not been previously done) take upon them the vows, and receive the sacrament of baptism; then, they are publicly acknowledged as members of the Church, enrolled accordingly, and entitled to all the rights of that relation.

CHAPTER VI.

CLASS MEETINGS

The Church has a right to adopt prudential regulations for edification—What a Class is—Examples from Scripture—Property of such meetings found in man's moral constitution—Power of sympathy—Influence of experience—example—Class Meetings Promotive of Christian fellowship—Nurseries for the ministry—Promotes self-examination—Permanency and prosperity of the Church, involved in the maintenance of Class Meetings.

IN matters pertaining to the edification and prosperity of the Church, wherein God has not revealed either command or prohibition, the Church is at liberty to be guided by her judgment and experience, of what is expedient and profitable. This proposition is laid down, and defended, at length, by Bishop Stillingfleet, in his "Irenicum," and is sustained by the practice of all the Churches; for, all employ means of religious improvement, or modes of operation, not prescribed in the Word of Revelation.

Upon this ground, we have an unquestionable right to institute, and maintain in use, among us, that means of religious edification, to which is given the name of Class Meeting. Mr. Wesley styles it, a "little prudential regulation," and says, "It can scarcely be conceived, what advantages have been

reaped from it." But, we have more direct authority from the Word of God, for this regulation, than can be claimed for many others, received by the different Churches, as right and necessary. It is true, we have not the *name* in holy Scripture; but, neither have we the names "Session," "Synod," "Association," "Convention," "Assembly," and others, which different branches of the Church have thought it expedient to adopt; yet, we have, as we think, authority for the thing signified by the name, as we employ it.

A Class, is a select company of persons, united together, for the purpose of mutual religious improvement; frequently meeting together to promote that object, by singing, prayer, relating their religious experience, exhortation, and such like exercises. From the first institution of a Church on earth, the pious have been accustomed to meet, at stated periods, for public religious improvement and instruction; and, it has doubtless been their custom, during all that period, to meet in more select and private assemblies, comprehending, only, those supposed to be actuated by a common object, for the enjoyment of greater freedom of religious conference and communion.

Malachi, in speaking of a period of general apostacy, and of the conduct of the faithful, at such a time, says, "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it." Here was a collection, of those, only, that "feared the Lord;" and, in the manner of a Class Meeting, they "spake often, one to another," for their mutual

edification and establishment. And the Most High approved the exercise; for, "the Lord hearkened and heard it." And, though it is not mentioned, that any "class-book" was kept by them, yet, God kept the record; "A book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought on his name." Malachi iii. 16.

We do not claim, that this was a Methodist Class Meeting, but we have, here, the object and the exercises of such a meeting well delineated, and encouraged, as strongly as could be desired; for God himself keeps a record for them—hears their pious conversations, marks their devout meditations, and writes their names in his book—as ancient kings were accustomed to record the names of such as had rendered services to the State, justly entitling them to a reward. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Malachi iii. 17

When Christ was about to send out the twelve Apostles, to preach, he called them to him, and gave them a lesson of private instruction and encouragement, in which the multitude had no participation; and when this was done, he went on, again, with his work of public teaching and preaching. Matthew x.

And, so, after he had delivered a public discourse to the multitude, he entered into a free private conversation with his disciples, on the same subject. Matthew xiii.

Even his character, as the true Messiah, he left the multitude to gather from his works, and commanded

his disciples to keep it with themselves. To them, only, did he converse, explicitly, about his sufferings and death. No stranger appears to have been admitted to the confidential circle, when they celebrated the Passover, when Christ instituted the holy Eucharist; and only a select *band* of his disciples, was permitted to witness his glorious transfiguration on the mount, and his terrible agony in the garden.

When the two disciples returned to Jerusalem, from Emmaus, after their interview with the risen Christ, they "found the eleven gathered together, and they that were with them." A private, select meeting, of the friends of Jesus, only, conversing of the wonderful things which had just transpired; and, in the private meeting, Jesus himself made his appearance, and communed with them. Luke xxiv. 33, &c. And, in the meetings for "prayer and supplication," held in an upper room at Jerusalem, while waiting for the gift of the Holy Ghost, none appear to have been present but the eleven, the pious women, and other disciples. It was the usage of the primitive Church, to hold private meetings, whenever they deemed it more for the edification of the Church and the glory of God. Even the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered in the presence of the members of the Church, only, in the early periods of Christianity.

Indeed, such a right is necessarily inherent in the nature of a Church, and, in fact, of all associated organizations; and, to dispute it, seems to savor of ignorance, or of a worse quality. State councils, military leaders, business corporations, family circles, all have their confidential meetings, and wisdom and

prudence approve ; what reason, then, exists, for forbidding to the Church, a right, not questioned in relation to any other department ?

But, the propriety and necessity of such meetings, are found in the elements of our moral constitution. Sympathy is a strongly developed attribute of our nature ; and, at the same time, an important ingredient in the Christian religion. It tends, mightily, to augment our pleasures, and to alleviate our sorrows ; but, it can have a free flow only in intercourse with select, confidential friends. How many hundreds of strangers the two disciples met, between Emmaus and Jerusalem, on their hasty return, after Jesus had been "made known to them in breaking of bread," we know not ; but, it is not probable, that they mentioned anything of their joyful tidings, to any one of that stranger multitude ; because, those strangers—perhaps enemies—did not sympathize in their joy ; but, they hastened to where the other disciples were, that they might impart joy to the others, and that sympathy might heighten their mutual joy.

The Psalmist desired only those who feared God, to attend, when he joyfully related what the Lord had done for his soul ; because, none others could sympathize in his enjoyment ; and he wished to tell it, where the relation would add enjoyment to kindred hearts, and the reflex influence of pious sympathy would increase his own joy.

But, sympathy is even more needful in suffering and sorrow, than in joy ; and one prominent design of class-meeting, is, to promote the relief of the

distressed by that means. Suppose the case of an unassured penitent; how soothing to his heart, to meet with a few sympathizing friends, whose feelings vibrate to the touches of anguish in his own. In the class-room he finds such friends; for each member there, is either in a like condition with himself, or has passed through that state; and, in either case, is well prepared to sympathize with him. And there such sympathy has its free flow, and practical operation. Realizing that he is surrounded by friends, only, his feelings are relieved of restraint and embarrassment, in declaring his fears and hopes; and his brethren thus obtain an accurate knowledge of his true condition and spiritual wants, and are, therefore, prepared to present his case, in humble supplication, to the throne of the heavenly grace. And, besides, this knowledge of his true state, enables the leader to administer such counsel, instruction, and encouragement, as the case demands. Without this accurate knowledge of one's spiritual state, which can only be obtained by free personal converse, it is impossible to give counsel suited to the peculiarities of each case. And many a time it has happened, that a single appropriate promise, applied directly to the case, has been more efficacious in imparting comfort, than many excellent public discourses.

Furthermore, there is, in the class-room, another kind of teaching, of inestimable value—teaching by *experience*. Whatever may be your state, or your trials, you will most probably hear, at the very first Class Meeting you attend, some one relate, how he passed through the very valley in which you now

are, and how he obtained deliverance. This affords strong encouragement, and may be the instrument of immediate relief. It has often happened, that, while one has related his experience of darkness and sorrow, and how he was, at last, enabled to lay hold on a particular promise of the gospel, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, the listening penitent has, like a blind man, followed, as it were, the sound of his footsteps, until the light of the same precious promise broke on his darkness, and he, too, was enabled to seize the joy of assurance, while the other described the manner of its attainment. The relating of religious experience, has ever been a most effective instrumentality of good, to sincere and humble hearers. Paul was accustomed to relate his own experience and conversion, in his public discourses, with powerful effect; but, it is not for every private Christian to use that means, in the like public manner, with the same effect; yet, the humblest may employ it, advantageously, in a select circle of sympathizing friends.

A striking instance of the power of personal experience, simply related, was presented in the temperance reformation, that swept over this country, so wonderfully, a few years ago. What the polish and power of cultivated eloquence failed to accomplish, was achieved, by a homely narration of the experience of reformed inebriates. The reason is obvious: those eloquent addresses were persuasive and argumentative enough, but the speakers and hearers were not in sympathetic communication with each other; the orators had no experience in the matters of which

they treated, and no sympathy of experience with the intemperate ; but, when men rose from the mire and the gutter, and told the unadorned tale of their own experience of crime, misery, and reformation, each drunkard heard his own history, and saw his own portrait, in the delineation, and felt himself in sympathetic correspondence with the speaker. The appeal was to the experience, the feelings, the heart ; and the effects were most astonishing.

We have often remarked the operation of the same principle, in other departments. A man who has never doubted the truth of the Christian Scriptures, may address a company of infidels, in arguments the most cogent and convincing, without success ; but, let one of those infidels become soundly converted to Christianity, and a simple narrative of his experience, and the manner in which he was converted, will, probably, be effectual, to an extent much greater than any strength of reasoning could be.

But, if the timid and self-distrustful are called to this exercise, in the presence of a promiscuous assembly of friends and foes, their freedom of speech, and feeling, must be greatly restrained ; and little profit could be expected to themselves, or to others. On this point, Bishops Coke and Asbury, in their notes on the Discipline, remark : "This would be, to throw a damp on these profitable assemblies, and cramp, if not entirely destroy, *that liberty of speech*, which is always made a peculiar blessing to earnest believers, and sincere seekers of salvation."

Class-meeting, properly attended and improved, is a most valuable means for promoting Christian

fellowship. In the public congregation, all, saint and sinner, meet on common ground; but, not in any relation of Christian intimacy, calculated to quicken personal fellowship. But, when you enter a class-room, with ten or fifteen Christian friends, there is, or should be, the freedom, confidence, and fellowship, of a cordial family group. The members become intimately acquainted with each other, personally and religiously, and come, naturally, to feel a deep interest in each other's welfare. And the ardent friendships there formed, have, in numerous instances, been so strong, that even the cold waters of death could not quench them. How often has the last message of the expiring Christian been, "Tell my *class mates* to meet me in heaven." And the good may well approve an institution, whose tendency is, to wake up joyful recollections, and delightful hopes, in the closing scene of mortal existence.

Bishops Coke and Asbury, in their notes on this subject, say: "The most profitable exercise of any, is, a free inquiry into the state of the heart. We, therefore, confine these meetings to *Christian experience*, only enjoining singing and prayer in the introduction and conclusion. And we praise the Lord, they have been made a blessing to scores of thousands. In short, we can truly say, that, through the grace of God, our classes form the *pillars* of our work, and are, in a considerable degree, our *universities* for the ministry."

A grand excellency, then, of the Class system, is, that it serves as an efficient auxiliary to the ministry: first, as a nursery of preachers, as suggested in the

Bishops' notes above. The practical working of the system, is very simple and natural. A pious young man is placed in charge of a Class, which he is expected to meet, and instruct, every week. Here he has a field, sufficiently important and responsible, to call forth his energies, and stimulate him to active exertion, to qualify himself for the useful performance of that work; but not so weighty as utterly to overwhelm, and cause him to sink beneath it. Here, he necessarily cultivates an intimate acquaintance with the Word of God, with the elements and workings of the human heart, with the operations of grace in the soul, and with the practical details of pastoral duty, in visiting, warning, instructing, and comforting, those under his care. And the direct tendency of this sort of exercise, is, to beget within him a deep and abiding concern for the salvation of souls. Thus, in mind, in heart, in practice, the faithful and intelligent leader is continually acquiring qualifications of the most valuable character, for the work of the ministry. And, from this fruitful nursery, many have been thrust out into the larger vineyard of the Lord.

And, truly, the Class has been a "school of the prophets," to our Church. Upon this nursery she has drawn for ministerial supplies, in time of need; and her draughts have been honored, by the sending forth of thousands of able ministers of the New Testament; "such as need not be ashamed; rightly dividing the Word of Truth." We value human learning, and are ever gratified to see young ministers enter the field, with all the panoply the schools can

supply ; yet, this knowledge alone, puffeth up ; but the teachings of the heart, in the class-room, tend to humility, and are edifying. It is very desirable, that the young evangelist should have both ; but, if either must be neglected, we would say, let it be the *classic*, rather than the *Class*.

The other aspect in which we would consider the Class system, as auxiliary to the ministry, is as an important appendage to the itinerant economy of our Church. We can conceive of no other plan, but that of itinerancy, by which the gospel can be preached to the poor every where. But, by this plan, the same minister has to take charge of many congregations, and these separated from each other by the distance of many miles ; consequently, he can spend but little time with each congregation, and can attend to but few, comparatively, of the details of pastoral work. To supply this lack of service, the members are divided into Classes, and committed to the immediate care of a leader, whose duty it is, to meet, visit, admonish, and attend to them, and report their condition—their wanderings, their afflictions, and prosperity—to the pastor. And so excellently does this arrangement work, that, wherever we have competent and faithful leaders, we have never known the societies to suffer, materially, from lack of pastoral attention, on the part of the minister. With this system in efficient operation, our itinerant plan works admirably ; but, wherever this branch of our work is neglected, the itinerant wheels are clogged. And, whenever we give up this part of our economy, either by an open abandonment of it, or by neglect calculated

to render it inefficient, and little more than nominal, itinerancy must soon follow in the same track; and "Ichabod" will be inscribed, in mournful characters, on our banner, where used to glow, in lines of light, the sacred motto of our glorying, "The poor have the gospel preached unto them." Firmly believing this truth, as we do, and seeing, as we are compelled to see, in various quarters, an increasing disposition to neglect and undervalue Class Meetings, we could covet the ability, to sound out such a warning as should startle negligent ministers and leaders, and alarm the sluggish and lukewarm membership into becoming diligence and zeal.

Again: self-examination is a great Christian duty, upon the right performance of which, the life of godliness, in the soul, in a great measure, depends. So long as we find one, regular and faithful in the performance of this duty, we are sure to find him faithful in the discharge of other duties, and lively in religion; and, in proportion as one neglects this essential duty, he becomes neglectful of other duties, and cold, lukewarm, or, at best, fitful and uneven, in his religious enjoyments. It is the instrument by which the Christian mariner calculates his latitude, and ascertains his true position. But, we know of no other means so effectual, in keeping alive a spirit of searching self-examination, as a regular attendance on Class Meetings. Those meetings, as remarked before, are, specially, *experience* meetings; in which it is the duty of each member, to state, as truly as possible, his present religious condition. This cannot be done, conscientiously, and with profit, without

severe examination of our own hearts and conduct. The fact, that we are expected to make such statements, weekly, not only has the effect, to keep us on our guard, during the week, but, requires, that we carefully examine ourselves, preparatory to the duty of the class-room. Without such regular and faithful examination, we are like one running an account, without noticing the state of his indebtedness, until he becomes hopelessly involved. And, in point of fact, it is almost universally true, that, while Christians are faithfully striving to grow in grace, and desirous to know, and improve, their real spiritual state, they are delighted with the scrutinizing exercises of the Class; but, when they become negligent of duty, and indisposed to meet their own hearts, in close self-examination, they have no relish for the services of the Class; the effect of which, is, to probe wounds they would rather conceal, than cure, by a searching process. Hence it is, that the Class Meeting has been aptly styled, a religious thermometer, indicating the temperature of the moral feelings and affections.

At this very point, the contest is now going on, and will continue, until a decision shall be firmly established, one way or the other, upon which, in our opinion, the future character and destiny of Methodism will depend, if not its very existence. Many worldly-minded members, even now, feel the Class too searching an ordeal, to suit the frigid temper of their piety, and seek excuses for neglecting it, or object to it altogether. It is mournful, to witness the prevailing neglect of this excellent means.

Mark how places of fashionable amusement are thronged, by members of the Church, to the scandal of religion; but, of all those wanderers from the path of duty, not one will be found to be a regular and faithful attendant on class-room duties; at least, we have never met with such a case. They will not, they cannot, love both; "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." If it is desired, to destroy the vital energies of Methodism, let us have a ministry, too dignified and important to attend to the meeting of Classes, and having them met by leaders; let us have leaders, who seldom meet their Classes, and never, in a proper spirit, or with proper zeal and interest; let us have members, too fashionable, too wealthy, and too lifeless, to love the class-room; and, then, though we should astonish the multitude, by our learned and eloquent sermons, we shall find vital godliness decaying, under our refined nursing, the "pillars of itinerancy" giving way, and breaches in the walls of Zion, large enough to admit worldly-minded, gay, pleasure-loving members. And, so soon as these predominate, "farewell to Methodist discipline, if not doctrine, too," and to that life and spiritual power, upon which, chiefly, our success has depended. We may philosophize as learnedly as we please, about causes of decline; but, until we come back to the close, scrutinizing, exercises of the Class, our speculations will be profitless. These facts are well understood by our keen-sighted adversaries; they know, that our Class Meetings have exerted a powerfully quickening influence on our membership, and they are concentrating all their force at this

point, and are laboring, with great zeal, to render this valuable means of religious improvement odious.

Is this, then, a time, to neglect our cherished institution? Surrender Class Meetings, and itinerary can no longer be sustained in its efficiency; surrender itinerary, and Methodism is extinct, so far as regards its grand original design, the “spreading of Scripture holiness over these lands.”

CHAPTER VII.

CLASS MEETINGS—CONTINUED

Class Meetings originated providentially—Notice of their rise—Bishops' Notes concerning—Duties of pastors, respecting Class Meetings, laid down in six particulars—Duties of the leader—Duty of members.

CLASS MEETINGS, like most of the peculiarities of Methodism, was not a thing of preconcerted arrangement, but a result of providential circumstances. Sincere seekers of salvation, came to Mr. Wesley for advice and assistance. He conversed and prayed with them; but soon they became so numerous, that it required too much of his time to attend to them, singly, and he appointed an hour, each week, at which he would meet, and give counsel, to all. But, ere long, they grew to such a number, that he could not, himself, even in that way, attend to all; and, then, after the example of Moses, in like circumstances, he divided them into small companies, of about twelve, called Classes, and appointed a judicious and pious leader to take charge of each Class. It was then expected, that the leader would personally visit each member of his Class, once a week, for purposes of religious edification; but, this was found too burden-

some on the leader, in most cases, and was attended with other inconveniences ; and, to remedy these evils, a weekly meeting, of all the members of the Class, was appointed, at which the leader inquired into their state, administered advice, and conducted other religious exercises. On this subject, the Bishops' Notes say : "At the beginning of Methodism, the leader called weekly on each of his Class ; in which case, twelve were quite sufficient for his inspection. But, very soon it was found abundantly preferable, for the whole Class to meet the leader, *together* ; not only for the sake of the leader, but for the good of the people, who, by that means, enjoy the unspeakable advantages of Christian fellowship."

On the subject of enlarging the Classes, the Notes say : "We have found it necessary, in innumerable instances, to enlarge the number of the Class, from the impossibility of providing a sufficiency of class-leaders, if the number were always limited to twelve."

It has been said, that the rule limiting Classes to twelve members, should be either observed or repealed : but, it is not, and never was, an imperative rule ; it is merely stated as a historical fact, that such was the common number at the commencement of the experiment. The Bishops' Notes, however, written more than fifty years ago, inform us, that, before that time, it had become necessary, in innumerable instances, to enlarge the Classes. But, we have no right to change a statement of fact, with regard to the original size of Classes, no more than to change any other recorded fact in our history.

DUTIES OF PREACHERS, LEADERS, AND MEMBERS, WITH
REGARD TO CLASS MEETINGS.

These we shall briefly notice.

First. It is the official duty of the PREACHER in charge of a station or circuit:—

1. To appoint the class-leaders. The preacher is responsible for the proper management of the societies under his care; and it has, therefore, been deemed advisable, to devolve on him the duty of selecting the leaders, who are the active agents in managing the concerns of the societies.

It is, however, a very common usage among ministers—either formally or informally—to consult the preferences of the Class, in selecting a leader. And this is not contrary to the law, nor to the usage, in other departments. In some instances, the appointment of certain officers is vested in the executive of the State; but, he has chosen to throw a portion of this responsibility on the people, who are called to express their choice by vote; and the executive simply ratifies their choice, unless there appear to him substantial reasons for disagreeing with them. But, cases may occur, in which a Class may become divided into parties; and, without the interference of a disinterested party, a leader would be selected, unacceptable to a large majority; but, by judiciously selecting one, most free from party bias, conflicting elements may be happily harmonized.

2. It is the duty of the preacher, to change improper or unfaithful leaders. This is, generally, a

very delicate and unpleasant item of duty; especially, in the instances wherin members have become neglectful of duty, and prefer a leader who will not urge them to faithfulness, or report their delinquencies. And it seems necessary, to vest, some where, the duty and power of correcting such evils; and the pastor would seem to be the most appropriate depository of such power and responsibility.

On this point, the *Notes* say: "As he is the only person in the circuit, who is responsible to the yearly Conference, for the decline of the work of God in his circuit, and the only one Conference *can make* responsible, he has the authority invested in him, of changing leaders, when they have lost the life of God, or are incapacitated for, or negligent of, their duty. But, if he ever use this power, in a capricious or tyrannical manner, the people may lay their grievances before the bishops, who have authority to suspend him for ill conduct; or, before the yearly Conference, which may proceed, even to his expulsion, if he grossly offend against that wisdom which is from above; 'which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits, *without partiality and without hypocrisy.*'"

3. It is the duty of the preacher, carefully to examine each leader, diligently, at least once a quarter, concerning his method of meeting a Class; and, of course, to instruct his leaders in the proper manner of discharging their duty. A duty of great practical importance; but quite too much neglected by preachers, for the good and prosperity of the Church.

4. The preacher is required to meet the leaders as often as possible, to receive reports from their Classes, and consult and advise for the promotion of the interests of the Church. The Bishops' Notes say: "He should meet them, weekly, in towns, (stations) and, as often as may be, in the country." "But, above all, he is to exhort the leaders, to instruct them in the best mode of addressing their Classes, and to set before them the inestimable value of the precious souls respectively intrusted to their care."

There is but too much reason to believe, that many preachers, even in stations, fail to hold, regularly, and as often as practicable, meetings of the leaders and stewards. In consequence, they are imperfectly acquainted with the condition and wants of their flocks, and cannot render their official forces as available as they otherwise would be.

Without proper attention to this duty, how is he to comply with the rule, which requires him to "see that all the leaders be not only men of sound judgment, but men truly devoted to God?"

Nor is his duty performed, at such meetings, when he has attended, in an orderly manner, to the mere *business* matters pertaining to them; he is to "exhort and instruct the leaders," "and to set before them the inestimable value of the precious souls committed to their care." And an excellent plan is, to appropriate a part of the time of each leaders' meeting to the exercises of a Class Meeting. This will not only give the preacher a better knowledge of the spiritual state of his leaders, but will tend greatly

to improve their zeal, and elevate the tone of their religious feelings.

5. It is also the duty of the preacher, to meet the Classes himself, as frequently as his other engagements will permit.

It is matter of regret, that this duty is so much neglected by preachers. Many of them, seldom, if ever, meet the Classes under their care. This neglect of the preacher, is calculated to beget a like spirit of indifference on the part of the leader; and the members will soon follow, if, indeed, they do not lead, in the neglect of an exercise always irksome to lukewarm and worldly-minded professors.

Formerly, our preachers, in passing round their circuits, made it a matter of duty and conscience to meet every Class, unless providentially prevented; and a preacher would as soon think of passing an appointment, without preaching to the congregation, as without meeting the Class; and this, too, when preachers had, say, twice as much riding and preaching to do, as at present. And it would be well for preachers to consider, that, if they would but follow up their sermons with a lively and searching examination of the Class, the effect of their labors would be incomparably more deep and lasting, than when they expend all their energies in preaching a long, and, perhaps, learned sermon, and leave the seed sown to take care of itself. By this exercise, the preacher's own spirit is quickened; his interest and concern for his people is deepened; the leader is encouraged in his work, by seeing the example of his pastor, and witnessing the importance he attaches

to this duty; and the members are enlivened, and led to set a high value on Class Meetings, because their pastor and leader so estimate them.

In this matter, the preacher may say, "Go," to the leaders and members, as persuasively, or as authoritatively, as may please him; but his efforts will have little effect, until he leads the way himself, and, with hearty good will, says, "Come."

6. Finally: when the preceding measures fail to bring members of the Church to a proper attendance upon this means of grace, it is the preacher's duty to deal with them according to the rules of the Church. When persons join our Church, they are required to give satisfaction, before the Church, that they are willing to keep our rules; and this, too, after having had an opportunity of trying them, at least six months; for, they must have met, at least six months, in Class, before they can be received into the Church. If, after this, they refuse submission to the rules which they have publicly, voluntarily, and, after a full trial, pledged themselves to observe and keep, it would be very unreasonable in them, to expect to retain their position in the Church. The offence against this rule, calling for the exercise of Discipline, is, "*habitually* breaking" it. (*General Rules.*) Or, as expressed in Chapter iv., Section 3, of Discipline, "Wilfully and repeatedly neglecting to meet their Class." A "wilful and repeated neglect;" a "habitual breaking" of a solemn promise made to the Church, must be, in itself, a grave impropriety, amounting to a violation of one's word; a breach of faith, which could be held innocent, only on the ground, that the promise

was fraudulently obtained, or was, in its nature, immoral.

When members become thus wilfully neglectful of duty, it is the minister's duty to give attention to the cases, according to the Discipline. He must visit them, "admonish them of the error of their ways," and "bear with them for a season." (*General Rules.*) If this should not prove effectual, he must "explain to them the consequences of continued neglect, viz., exclusion." (*Discipline*, p. 93.) "If they do not amend;" "if they repent not;" still, they shall be cited to appear before the society, or a select number; and, if found guilty, by a majority of the members before whom the case is brought, "they have no more place among us. We have delivered our souls." (*General Rules.*) "Let them be *laid aside*; and let the preacher show, that they are excluded for a *breach of our rules*, and not for *immoral conduct.*" (*Discipline*, p. 93.)

The course of Discipline seems sufficiently lenient in this case. The leader, and then the preacher, are required to visit, and admonish, the delinquent; if he continues wilfully disobedient, his fellow members are called to judge of his conduct and spirit; and, even when found guilty, by their verdict, the mildest language, and the gentlest measures, are employed. Instead of a harsh expulsion, the rule says, "He has no more *place among us*;" "let him be *laid aside*;" and it is to be published, that it is not for immoral conduct, but for breach of our rules. And, even after all this, he has a right to appeal to a higher tribunal, if he think justice has not been done. But,

forbearing, as the prescribed course is, the administration of many of our ministers falls greatly short of the rule. Persons are permitted to live, in wilful, habitual disregard, of the rules they are bound and pledged to keep, even for years, and are allowed to do so with impunity. This is offering perfect immunity to disobedience, and is calculated to bring the institution and the administration into contempt, and to destroy the spirituality of the Church. "Be mild, but strict. Allow of no exempt cases," is the rule that must be observed, if we would have a spiritual Church, and "spread Scriptural holiness over these lands."

Second. The duties of the CLASS-LEADER.

In our economy, this office is one of great importance. The Bishops' Notes speak of it thus: "The office is of vast consequence. The revival of the work of God, does, perhaps, depend as much upon *the whole body of leaders*, as it does upon *the whole body of preachers*. We have, almost constantly, observed, that, when a leader is dull, or careless, or inactive; when he has not abilities, or zeal, sufficient to reprove, with courage, though with gentleness, and to press a present salvation upon the hearts of the sincere, the Class is, in general, languid; but, on the contrary, when the leader is much alive to God, and faithful in his office, the Class is, also, in general, lively and spiritual. It is the same, in general, with a minister and his flock; and, every leader is, in *some degree*, a gospel minister: though we may add, that, among us, a spiritual body of leaders may counteract the otherwise pernicious consequences of a languid ministry.

With regard to authority for such an office, it can be only necessary to remark, it is clearly the right of a Church, to appoint such officers, either temporarily or permanently, as may be deemed necessary for the edification of the body. Even in the New Testament, divers officers are named, as being called into the service of the Church, who appear not to be of the regular public ministry.

Thus, we have not only Apostles, Evangelists, Pastors, Elders, Deacons, &c., but *Teachers*, *Helps*, &c. And, if class-leaders fall not into the first classification above, they certainly do into the second. And, so, in the primitive Church, they had sub-deacons, lictors, and other officers.

But, this point is so evident, that more need not be said of it.

We come, now, more directly, to consider the official duties of a class-leader. These are:—

1. “To see each member of his Class once a week.” We have seen, that, originally, it was his duty to see them at their places of residence, individually. And, though a change was early made, by which all the members were to meet the leader at one place, weekly, this was not intended to release him from the duty of seeing each member once a week, when practicable; but, to lighten his burden, by bringing to one place, weekly, all that could be collected. Those who do not meet him in Class, he is expected, in ordinary cases, to visit, personally, and ascertain the cause of their absence. It is very true, that, in the present neglected condition of the Classes, it would, in many cases, be a task of consider-

able weight, for the leader to visit, weekly, all the absent members of his Class ; but, we know no other way of making it lighter, but by a faithful performance of it. This will have that effect: 1st. By rendering the labor pleasant to the leader. 2nd. By exciting a deeper interest in the hearts of members, which will bring them to the class-room. 3rd. Even luke-warm members would attend their Classes, rather than be constantly visited as delinquents ; unless they have lost their “desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins,” entirely. And, if this be their condition, and they cannot be reclaimed from it, they should either withdraw or be “laid aside.” If such a course were diligently pursued, it would not be long, until the truly sincere would become regular in their attendance, and would regard it as a high privilege ; and the dead branches would fall off, and leave the Church freed from their clogging incumbrance.

Leaders, however, sometimes fall short of duty, by neglecting to appoint Class Meetings regularly ; by failing to attend them when appointed ; by attending after the appointed hour ; and by a tedious and uninteresting manner of leading their Classes. Such a course is calculated to discourage the members, and to bring the institution into utter neglect, and even contempt.

The duty we have been considering, is a general one, necessary to the discharge of others enumerated ; but, as, in the present posture of affairs, it involves important obligations, not in that enumeration, we have given it the place of a distinct item.

2. The next part of the leader's duty, is, that to be performed in the class-room—or elsewhere, when he visits, or meets, his members—and is thus stated in the General Rules: “To inquire how their souls prosper.” The Section of the Discipline on Class-Meeting, (p. 72) says, “Carefully to inquire how each soul in his Class prospers; not only how each person observes the outward rules, but how he grows in the knowledge and love of God.” His first care, then, should be, to ascertain the real condition, as nearly as possible, of each soul under his care, by carefully and plainly inquiring, *first*, how each one attends to his Christian duties; as, reading God’s holy Word, attending upon his ordinances, family prayer, private devotion, &c. But, if he adopt a vague, stereotyped form of inquiry, such as, “How are you prospering?” “Is it still your desire to serve God?” and the like, without going into home questions and searching inquiries, he may meet the same member, for years, without knowing whether he prays in his family, or in secret, or wholly neglects these and other duties. He should, *secondly*, inquire into their spiritual state, and learn if they have present enjoyment in religion; if their confidence and hope gain strength; if they gain power over their besetting sins; if duty becomes more pleasant to them; and, so, of other points. And, having, like a skilful physician, acquired what knowledge he can of the condition of his patient, it becomes his duty to *prescribe*, agreeably to the indications presented. “To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require.” (*General Rules.*) And, with this

knowledge of their state, he will be enabled to send his words home, and reach the proper point. This duty and exercise is so reasonable, and so well accords with the teachings of God's Word, that it would seem unnecessary to defend it, against either men of reason or men of religion. There is a striking agreement between the duty of a leader, as here prescribed, and that of a minister, in visiting the sick, as laid down in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith: "It is the minister's duty to administer (having first ascertained his spiritual state) instruction, conviction, support, consolation, or encouragement, as his case may seem to require." (Confession of Faith, p. 447.) And, if it be a solemn duty to do this, when members are sick, its propriety, in health, can hardly be doubted, and its good effects are nearly certain.

Another part of the leader's duty, is, to receive, from his Class, their contributions for the support of the gospel. And, if all leaders attend, faithfully, to this part of their work; and, especially, if they, at the same time, did not leave any other part undone, we verily believe the effect would be, to prevent faithful ministers from suffering painful embarrassment from want of support, and very greatly to diminish the number of locations, among those whose experience and abilities well qualify them for extensive usefulness in the Church.

3. Another class of duty, pertaining to the office of a class-leader, has respect to his pastor and to his fellow officers. It is his duty, "To meet the ministers and stewards of the society, once a week," in stations,

where a leaders' meeting should be held weekly; and, in country places, to meet when opportunity offers. Yet, it is no uncommon occurrence, for one half the leaders to be absent from the regular leaders' meeting. Such delinquency tends to throw the whole machinery of our system out of joint; and, should, in good conscience, be carefully guarded against, by those upon whom the duty rests.

At this meeting, it is the duty of the leader, besides paying over to the stewards what he may have collected, "To inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reproved."

This duty necessarily implies, that of "seeing his members once a week," as already noticed. When they are absent from Class Meeting, the reasonable conclusion is, that they are either sick, lukewarm, or walking disorderly; and he should, therefore, if practicable, see them, and, if sick, administer such comfort and aid as the case may require, and report them to the pastor, that he, too, may visit them. If they have become indifferent about their duty, he should exhort them to greater diligence; if they are "walking disorderly," he should plainly, but affectionately, reprove, and correct them; if the erring one hear him, he has gained his brother; but, if he be perverse, and will not receive reproof for his improprieties, it is the leader's duty to report the case to the pastor. And, were these duties faithfully attended to, doubtless many precious souls would be thereby reclaimed from their wanderings, and rendered useful members of the Church of God.

But, how is the leader to report the sick and the disorderly, unless he visit his members, to ascertain their condition? Why is it made his special duty to make these reports, unless he is to take the necessary steps to gain the information in question? The view we have taken of this matter, is strictly in accordance with that presented by Bishops Coke and Asbury, in their Notes. After adverting to the change from the original plan of visiting the members, individually, to that of meeting them all together, they add, "At the same time, the leader is expected to visit the members of his Class, at their own houses; especially, when they are sick, or confined, as often as his circumstances will admit."

It is, also, a duty of the leader, to "converse frequently, and freely," with the minister under whose charge he is, that, so, he may be the better prepared for the discharge of his duties, and that the minister may, the more fully, understand the condition of his Class. By this means, too, the leader may, in a good degree, counteract the effect of any neglect of duty on the minister's part.

Third. Duty of MEMBERS.

A duty rests on the membership of the Church, answering to that of ministers and leaders. If members do not feel under moral obligations to fulfil their covenant with the Church, by faithful and conscientious attendance upon its appointed means of grace, it will be of little avail, as they are concerned that preachers and leaders discharge their duty. But, unhappily, the effect of delinquency, on the part of one member, extends to others, and operates.

perniciously, to the extent of his influence. Men ought to make up their minds, fully and firmly, to "observe, and keep, the rules of the Church," or they should not join it at all. Or, if, having joined with such a determination, they have lost it, they should either recover their lost resolution, or, if determined not to comply with their obligations to the Church, they should withdraw from it, and not be stumbling-blocks in the way of others.

It is not difficult to find those who tell us they do not enjoy Class Meetings, and, therefore, do not desire to attend them. And this is no doubt true, for a most obvious reason; but, with an experience of many years, on this subject, we have yet to find the first zealous Christian, faithful in other duties, and seeking to grow in grace, who did not love a lively Class Meeting, and feel profited by it.

CHAPTER VIII.

AVOIDING EVIL—PROFANE SWEARING.

Scripture testimony against this vice—It is without excuse—Weakens confidence in swearer's veracity—Tends to lessen reverence for God—Other forms of profanity beside direct swearing—Lord Chesterfield's testimony against it—Tends to weaken the force of judicial oaths—Propriety of such oaths shown—Duty of Christians to reprove this vice—Examples.

WE have seen, that true repentance is the proper condition of admission into the Church; but, a question arises, how is the genuineness of repentance—the sincerity of the desire to flee from the wrath to come, and its continued existence and exercise—to be known, or judged of? Our simple moral code says, "*But, wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its FRUITS.*" And the bearing of these fruits we require; for, continues the rule, "*It is, therefore, expected of all who continue therein, (in the society) that they should continue to evidence their desire for salvation, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced; such as, the taking of the name of God in vain.*"

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," is the third precept of the Decalogue—that great moral constitution of God's first organized Church in the world; and "*Hallowed be thy name,*"

is the first petition taught us, in the inimitable prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout the Word of God, as well in the Old as in the New Testament, the clearest and strongest testimony is borne against this vice. "By reason of swearing, the land mourneth," is a declaration of Divine inspiration; Hosea iv. 2; and the command of Christ himself is, "Swear not at all." "Every one that sweareth, shall be cut off." Zechariah v. 3. "Neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God." Leviticus xviii. 21. "Above all things, my brethren, swear not." James v. 12. This vice has fewer excuses to plead, than most others: it is even without a plea, in the native inclinations of the depraved heart—no one having an original inherent inclination to profane the name of the Lord. Nor can selfishness furnish any thing in extenuation of its guilt. A desire of gain, or of sensual gratification, may impel to a violation of nearly all the other commandments; but no such excuses, miserable as they are, can be pleaded, in behalf of this unnatural vice.

Nor can such profane appeal to the Supreme Being, be employed, either innocently, in confirmation of truth, or successfully, for the establishment of falsehood; for the effect is rather to weaken, than to strengthen, any declaration it may be intended to sustain; for the just inference of all upright and sensible men will be, that he who will violate the law of God against *profanity*, will not scruple to violate God's law against *falsehood*. The first is an indignity offered to the Lord of Heaven, the other is an attempt to deceive a fellow man: and it is

hardly to be expected, that a man who will violate a divine law, the breach of which insults the honor of God, will scrupulously respect another divine law, the violation of which injures or deceives man ; unless, indeed, it be assumed, that it is more criminal to sin against man, than to sin directly against God.

It has, however, been pleaded, in extenuation of profane swearing, if not in its justification, that it at least wrongs no man, and that, of course, the Deity cannot be injured by it. "Wherein, then," it has been inquired, "consists the wrong, or sinfulness, of the practice?" We reply: 1st. It being a conceded point, that a mere prohibition, by the being, or body, having a right to prescribe rules of conduct, renders disobedience criminal ; that, therefore, which God forbids, is wrong, because he forbids it. 2nd. That it may be a wrong in his bearings on the Divine government, the injurious tendencies of which, are not discernible by the limited minds of mortals. Hence, it does not follow, that nothing is wrong, or sinful, but that which we can see to be so, by its practical and direct effects on society ; but, 3rdly. We *can* clearly perceive the evil influence of profane swearing, on the moral feelings and habits of men. Reverence for God, is the foundation, not only of all true devotion, but also of obedience and morality.

Every thing, therefore, the effect of which is, to destroy, or even lessen, reverence for the Divine character, cannot be less than sinful against God, directly, and injurious to the morals of society. And, that such is the legitimate effect of an irreverent, or profane use of the sacred name, requires only a

moment's reflection to prove to any sober mind. The name of God, connects, inseparably, with God himself. If the name of God be habitually used, in low and vicious associations, the mind will acquire a habit of associating the *character* of the Deity, as his *name* is habitually associated. Hence, when the holy name of the Lord is heard in haunts of vice, and from tongues depraved and profane—when it is belched forth in threats of vengeance, in gusts of unholy passion, mingled in the profane jest, and made a part of the drunkard's song—it needs no proof to convince an honest mind, that reverence for God is thereby greatly lowered, or destroyed; and not only in the minds of those who thus desecrate the Divine name, but also of those—and especially the young—who constantly hear it so employed. Accordingly, we find it no uncommon thing with young persons, to look upon profane swearing as a manly accomplishment, rather than a thing to be shunned, and loathed, as sinful and degrading. The name of God associates in their minds no feeling, no thought of reverence.

Now, when the supreme power, even among men, is contemned—despised—by the subjects, the true principle of obedience is gone, and the chief ligament binding society together, as a civil organization, is effectually severed; how much more, then, must the contemning of the Divine name, character, and authority, of the Supreme Governor of the Universe, have the effect to weaken a sense of moral obligation, on the part of the subjects of that government, and lower the universal standard of morality among men.

And it will not be disputed, that it is rare to find one a confirmed profane swearer, who is, at the same time, free from other forms of immorality.

It should be remarked, that there are forms of profanity, or of taking the name of the Lord in vain, besides those more coarse and vulgar ones, which are generally condemned by society, and which seem to be looked on as innocent, by many who abhor the vice in its grosser forms. We allude to appeals made to the name of God, in a light and thoughtless manner, and often on the most trivial occasions. And here let it be noticed, that "the commandment is exceeding broad." It is not limited to profane swearing—which imports an appeal to God, for the confirmation of some declaration made—but extends to "taking the name of the Lord in vain," which as fully embraces every light and irreverent use of God's holy name, as it does profane swearing in a stricter sense. But, there are many, and, among the number, not a few professors of the religion of the Saviour, who use the name of Jehovah as a sort of *by-word*, to be employed on all occasions, as an exclamation of astonishment, of fear, of joy, or even of disappointment or irritation. All this is wrong; "for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain;" and, evidently, all such uses of the Divine name, is a violation of God's commandment.

Lord Chesterfield, emphatically a man of the world, remarks of this vice: "We frequently hear some people, in good company, interlard their conversation with oaths, by way of embellishment, as they suppose; but, we must observe, too, that those who do so, are

never those who contribute, in any degree, to give that company the denomination of good company. They are, generally, people of low education; for, swearing, without having a single temptation to plead, is as *silly* and *illiberal* as it is wicked." Another says, "It is neither brave, *polite*, nor wise."

An additional consideration, showing the wickedness of profane cursing and swearing, is found in the fact, that it tends, directly, to weaken the force and effect of judicial oaths, so essential in carrying out the ends of civil government. Officers are not permitted, in civilized governments, to enact, adjudicate, or execute laws; nor witnesses, to testify in cases involving the life, character, liberty, or property, of others, without first taking upon them the binding solemnities of an oath. Such an oath, in whatever form administered, is nothing else than a solemn appeal to God, to witness the truth of a declaration, and an invocation of his judgments, in case of falsehood. The solemn upraising of the right hand, among the Jews, touching the altar of the god by whom they swore, or striking down the sacrifice, among the Greeks and Romans; and, in our own times, swearing with the right hand resting on the New Testament—the record of the new covenant—and afterwards kissing it; the formal invocation, "so help me God;" and, "as you shall answer to God at the great day"—all go to show this to be the nature of a judicial oath. And, whenever such oaths cease to possess the utmost sacredness, there can be no security of property, life, or character.

Baron Montesquieu says: "There is no nation living, which has been longer uncorrupted than the Romans; no nation, where moderation and poverty have been longer respected. Such was the influence of an *oath* among those people, that nothing bound them stronger to the laws. They often did more for the observance of an *oath*, than they would have done for their thirst of glory, or for the love of their country." *Spirit of Laws.* chap. xiii. p. 144. Yet, all history testifies, that, when reverence for an oath became diminished among the Romans, and the Epicurean system, which discarded the doctrine of Providence, was introduced, the honor and prosperity of the Romans at once began to decline.

Now, swearing is an appeal to God, as before remarked, for the truth of our declaration. But, suppose a man in the habit of making such appeals to the Supreme Being every hour, profanely, lightly, angrily, jestingly; must not the tendency be, to diminish, or even destroy, the sacredness of an appeal to God? And can *he* be expected to feel its binding force, equally with the man who never makes such an appeal, but reverently and religiously? It is true, the legal formality accompanying the administration of a judicial oath, may have some effect to wake up attention to the serious character of such an appeal, and thus give security against perjury. But, even this formality is passed through, in many cases, with such careless hurry, and irreverent levity, on the part of the officer—himself, perhaps, a profane swearer—that the security, at that point, is not, by any means, what could be desired.

Some persons have thought, that the prohibition, "Swear not at all," embraces judicial, as well as profane swearing; yet, contradict their own doctrine, by solemnly "affirming, under the pains and penalties of perjury," which comprehends the very essence of a judicial oath. The declaration, that "an oath, for confirmation, is the end of all strife," gives sanction to the practice; and Christ himself, when put on oath by his judge, hesitated not to answer on oath.

If universal truth, honor, and justice, reigned over all the earth, such security would, to be sure, be unnecessary; but this is not the case. Yet, even then, the moral *lawfulness* of judicial oaths would not, as it appears to us, be destroyed; though their employment might become unnecessary for the security of society. The Supreme Being, himself, the more fully to assure the heirs of promise, condescended to confirm his word by an *oath*; that, by two immutable things—his promise and his oath—in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have *strong* consolation.

A judicial oath is in the nature of a solemn religious vow, and should always be administered with a religious solemnness, and under suitably impressive forms. The careless, irreverent manner, in which this is but too commonly performed, is certainly of immoral tendency.

It is the duty of Christians, not only to avoid all forms and degrees of profanity, but also to do all in their power to exterminate the vice from society.

To this end, it is a duty to reprove profaneness, whenever suitable opportunity offers. But, to do this, successfully, it must be performed with great prudence; for, injudicious or untimely reproof, will always be more likely to irritate than to reform. No harsh language should be used; no resentful or contemptuous feeling should be manifested in reproving; nor should it be done in company, if avoidable; and, especially, not in a manner to inflict great mortification on the offender. As the vice has no defence, and, therefore, no defenders—at least, no respectable ones—any man, when prudently approached, will readily confess the folly, if not the wickedness, of the habit; and the chief difficulty lies, in making an impression sufficiently strong to operate as a check on the habit. Perhaps no other vice could be so effectually operated on, by prudent reproof, as this.

Mr. Buck relates several anecdotes bearing on this point. At a dinner party, on a certain occasion, a gentleman of fashion spoke with great enthusiasm in eulogy of the virtues of Charles I., but embellished his discourse with many oaths. Mr. Howe, who was present, agreed with him in the opinions expressed, but was astonished to find him overlook one of Charles' great excellencies. The gentleman inquired, eagerly, what virtue he referred to. "That he was never heard to swear a profane oath," replied Mr. Howe. The swearer apologized, and promised reformation.

The same gentleman—Mr. Howe—one day, passed where two men were *cursing* each other with great

bitterness ; he took off his hat, and said, very devoutly, “I pray God to *bless* you both.” The reproof was effectual.

A peasant, hearing an Archbishop, who was also *Elector* of Cologne, swear profanely, put on such a look of astonishment as caused his reverence to inquire what he was so surprised at. “To hear an Archbishop swear,” replied the peasant. “I swear not as an Archbishop, but as a Prince,” responded the Elector. “But, my Lord,” said the peasant, “when the devil takes the *Prince* for swearing, what will become of the Archbishop?”

Mr. Romaine, hearing a man swearing profanely, but, apparently, without being conscious of it, paused, drew out a half crown, and said to him, “I will give you that money, if you will ask God to damn your soul.” The man appeared startled at so shocking a proposal, and inquired why Mr. Romaine supposed he would be hired to do so wicked a thing. “You did it just now, for nothing ; and I could not doubt that you would repeat it for pay,” said Mr. Romaine. “God *bless* and reward you,” said the swearer, “who ever you are : I hope I shall never swear again.”

A Mr. G., a member of the National Church, but a profane swearer, lived in a pious family at S—. A little child, of four years old, being shocked with his profanity, inquired of her mother, if Mr. G. said, “Our Father ;” but her mother could not inform her, and she resolved to find out by watching ; and found that he did say prayers regularly. Soon after, she heard him swear very bitterly, and, approaching him, she said, “Mr. G., did you not say ‘Our Father,’ ”

this morning? How, then, dare you swear? Do you think he will be your Father, if you swear?" He did not live long after; but, while he did live, was never known to swear.

Mr. Cowper, the poet, reproves the vice in the following well-pointed lines:—

“A *Persian*, humble servant of the sun,
Who, though devout, yet bigotry had none;
Hearing a lawyer, grave in his address,
With adjurations every word impress,
Supposed the man a bishop, or at least—
God’s name so much upon his lips—a priest;
Bowed, at the close, with all his graceful airs,
And begged an interest in his fervent prayers.”

A gentleman, not long since, was denouncing a teacher as being ignorant of the principles of Grammar; and, in doing so, employed the following sentence, with a compound oath at each point where we place a dash: “I tried the — fellow, and — I found he could not parse a single — sentence correctly.” “That may be,” replied the gentleman to whom his remarks were addressed, “and still he may be a good grammarian; for some sentences cannot be parsed: the following, for example, from high authority, no one can parse,” and then beginning, “I tried the — fellow,” &c., quoting the gentleman’s own words throughout. “I thank you,” said the reproved man, “I am truly ashamed of a habit which makes a man, at once, violate the rules of grammar, of good breeding, and sound morality; and I *will* quit it.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE SABBATH.

Instituted at Creation—Its necessity seen in physical and moral constitution requiring rest—The command respects a seventh part of our time, as measured by days, rather than a particular day—The observance of the same identical day impracticable—Right to change the Jewish day—Original ordinance not repealed—virtually re-enacted—Sabbath both a civil and religious institution among the Jews, and so among Christian nations; enforced by law only, in its civil character. How far legislatures may rightfully go—Church must enforce religious observance of the day.

THE obligation of the Sabbath is clearly settled by the sacred Scriptures. It was instituted at the creation of man; and its necessity is apparent, in both his physical and moral constitution. It is an appointment of one day, in seven, to be devoted to rest. A fact, needing no proof, is, that both the human body and mind require rest, in order to keep them in a healthful, vigorous state, for any considerable length of time; accordingly, the Creator benevolently ordained, that one seventh part of our time should be appropriated to rest. And a proper consideration of this fact, would, it appears to us, dispose of the endless controversies that have been carried on, about the *particular day*, in seven, proper to be observed; and about the proper manner of observing the day. The

command is, not to keep holy a day which we call the *seventh*, as a name by which to distinguish it from the *first*, or any other; but, the command embraces one *seventh part* of our time, at regular periods, as marked by *days*. The command would not be fulfilled, nor its benevolent object attained, by resting every seventh *hour*, or *month*, or *year*; for, the intervals would be too short, in the first case, and, besides, would conflict with a rest of *HOURS*, which God has ordained in each day; and, in the latter cases, the intervals would be too long; therefore, the ordinance requires a seventh part of our time, as measured by *days*. When God ordained that the “*tenth part*” of the Israelite’s substance should be given for religious uses, the plain import is *a tenth*, and not particular items amounting to that proportion, designated by that name. *A tenth* was consecrated to sacred uses; but, until it was designated, and separated from the residue, one part was no more sacred, no more the Lord’s, than another; but, when once so set apart, it became sacred to the uses appointed. So, “*the seventh day*” no more means *Saturday*—as we denominate it—than it does *Sunday*; but *a* seventh day, or *a* day in every seven *days*. The only argument for a different construction, is, that as God made the Heavens and the Earth in six days, and rested on the seventh, so consecrating it to rest, every seventh day from that on which the Creator rested—and no other—has been a proper Sabbath, agreeably to the original institution. But, in order to give effect to the argument, it should be proved, or, at least, shown to be probable, that, from

the creation, down through the period in which “all flesh had corrupted its way,” and the thoughts of man’s heart “were *only* evil,” and that “continually,” the Sabbaths had been regularly observed, down to the time of the giving of the law, when this statute was re-enacted; and, that, thence, down to Christ, the Jews, through all their apostacies, long captivities among the heathen, and abominable idolatries, had done the same thing; and that the seventh day, counting regularly downward from the seventh of creation, had been even kept up, and was certainly known at the end of four thousand years. This, probably, no one will be bold enough to undertake; and, therefore, the argument becomes forceless and void. It is certain, that the day kept as the seventh, by the Jews, was known by all, at the time of the Saviour’s advent; but, no one knew it certainly to be the seventh, in regular seventh day succession, either from the creation or from the giving of the law. Evidence that it could not have been of the essence of the original command, that the identical day, of twenty-four hours, should be kept sacred, in each week, from the first Sabbath down to the end of time, and every where, is found in the impossibility of the thing. Thus, the Jewish Sabbath commenced at sunset, on the sixth day of the week, and closed at sunset, on the seventh. Now, how are we, and our antipodes, on the opposite side of the globe, to keep this law on the same day, at the same time? With *them*, it is “the sixth hour of the sixth day;” and all labor ceases, and the Sabbath begins; but, it is with *us*, at the same instant, *sunrise*, on the

sixth day; and we go forth to our labor, and perform a full day's work, before the antipodal Sabbath reaches us. Nay, more: even in our own country, the Sabbath begins, and ends, considerably later in one longitude than in another. The disciples of Christ had, therefore, a legitimate right to adopt, as the day of rest, that day on which the Saviour conquered death, rose from the grave, and, as it were, rested from his fierce contest with the powers of death and hell.

It has, however, been contended by some, that the Sabbath, being a Jewish institution, all obligation to observe it has passed away, with the other ceremonies of the Jewish ritual; and that its only present obligation is, as a civil institution; or, at least, one only intended to serve the convenience of man, and possessing no peculiar sacredness of character. One support of this theory, we have attempted to remove, by treating the question of a change of the day from the seventh to the first; for some, if not all its advocates, contend, that, if there were any sacredness in the original Sabbath, there is none in a day substituted for it, and not commanded by Divine authority.

But, having already disposed of this point, it will not be directly referred to again. To the main argument, however, we shall make some more direct reply.

First, then, the Sabbath was instituted at the creation, and many centuries before the establishment of the Jewish polity; and the re-enactment of it, as found in the Decalogue, is specifically based on

its prior existence and original institution: “For in six days God made Heaven and Earth, &c., and rested on the seventh day, and *hallowed* it.” This is the reason assigned for its re-enactment: it was not, therefore, originally, a *Jewish* institution; much less one of the Jewish *ceremonial* laws. Of the laws given to the Jews by Moses, some were *ceremonial*, some purely *civil*, and some *moral*. The *ceremonial* ceased to be of force, on the bringing in of the better dispensation to which they referred, and which they adumbrated; the *civil* ceased with the Jewish polity, and, indeed, never were of binding obligation, beyond the limits of Jewish jurisdiction; but, the *moral*, being founded on the nature of the government of God, and the constitution of man, is as abiding as the unalterable character of the first, or the unvarying elements of the second. The command, to keep holy the Sabbath, is found in the same great code—the ten commandments—with the commands against murder, theft, and perjury. Are those commands moral, and of perpetual obligation? So is that of the Sabbath. It has been urged, that the law of the Sabbath was not re-enacted, or ratified, by Jesus Christ; and, that, at least, to some extent, the others were. To this, it may be replied, first, that Christ found the Jews in an extreme, on the subject of the Sabbath; insomuch, that he deemed it necessary to correct their errors, and reprove their folly, on this point; for, works of necessity and of mercy, were, by them, alike regarded as criminal, on the Sabbath, as ordinary labor, or the grossest possible violation of its requirements. Hence, it was not needful, to urge, very

strongly, upon them, the observance of a command which already they kept, with a strictness, contravening, at least, a part of its original design. But, secondly, a law, once enacted, remains ever in force, until repealed, or, until the power enacting it, ceases to possess authority to enforce it. But, the law of the Sabbath was enacted by the God of all, and has a place in his statute book, *unrepealed*; and, until the advocates of the opposite position can show a repeal of the *fourth commandment*, or prove that He who shook Sinai, and sent out fearful thunders and lightnings at its giving, has ceased to be Universal Governor—ceased to be God—we may safely declare that law still in full force.

But, if a positive re-enactment of the law of the Sabbath, by Christ, be insisted on, we have even that, as we believe. Christ declared himself “Lord of the Sabbath;” Matthew xi. 8; and, accordingly, the day was changed, so as most to honor its Lord. He said, furthermore, “I came not to destroy *the law*.” This was spoken of either the *ceremonial* or the *moral* law; but, it was not spoken of the ceremonial law, because he did come to destroy, or abrogate, that law. The moral law, was, therefore, necessarily intended; and the Sabbath was a prominent part of that law, being one of the ten commandments. This he came not to destroy, but to fulfil, or confirm. This appears very like a full recognition of the Sabbath as an abiding law.

Again: when a certain ruler came to Jesus, inquiring the way of salvation, Christ directed him to keep the commandments, and reminded him that

he *knew* them. The ruler inquired, "Which" commandments? As if he had said, "Yes, I know them; but, which do you mean, the moral or the ceremonial?" Christ answered that question, by naming *four* of the *ten* commandments. Now, in thus naming a part, and not all, of the commandments, we suppose Christ designed to indicate the *class* of commandments to which he had before referred; and not to intimate, that those specified were of binding obligation, and the others not so. Indeed, this must have been the case, or else he intended to say, that six of the commandments were not in force. For this, no one contends; and, hence, the conclusion is necessary, that Christ distinctly recognized the binding force of all the ten commandments, and, of course, of the one concerning the Sabbath. Either six of the commandments are here virtually repealed, or the whole ten fully recognized, or—if it be preferred—re-enacted.

Again: when a doctor of the law inquired of Christ, "Which was the great commandment of the law," he answered, not by specifying any particular one, but by embracing all pertaining to the first table—or duties to God—as *one* commandment, and calls it the *first* and great command; adding, "The *second* is like unto it;" and, then, in like manner, by the comprehensive requirement, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," includes all the second table, or relative duties of the law. Here the entire ten commandments are clearly recognized under their two classifications; and the *fourth* is as certainly included as the first, sixth, or ninth.

All, then, are bound to keep the Sabbath holy ; but, *how* is the Sabbath to be kept ? This is a question of some practical importance ; for, as in the days of Christ, a party existed, who went to the extreme of forbidding works of mercy and necessity on the Sabbath ; and, another party, who looked upon the day as a period to be devoted to amusements, or selfish gratification, as inclination might lead ; so, now, are to be found, parties of the same description ; and, to seek out the just medium between those extremes, is the duty of the well balanced and intelligent Christian.

Among the Jews, the Sabbath was both a civil and religious institution ; and, in this double character, its observance was enforced by corporeal penalties. These qualities are, indeed, inherent in the nature of the Sabbath, and its original objects ; and, therefore, neither of them can be overlooked now—no more than then—without a departure from its primary design, and a loss of a portion of its intended benefits. Accordingly, in Christian countries, it is observed as a civil ordinance, necessary to the health and happiness of society ; and the keeping of it is enforced by the laws of the land. So much, civil governments may, of right, do, without any interference with the rights of conscience ; and, indeed, this is due to the subjects of government, as a part of the protection due their relation ; but, as, in our country, the civil government has no direct control over the religious rights of the people, the *religious* observance of the Christian Sabbath cannot be enforced by the laws of the land ; and, is, therefore, very properly left to the manage-

ment of the Churches. This necessary distinction between the civil and religious bearings of the Sabbath, has evidently been overlooked, both by those who would have the government to enforce a strictly *religious* sanctifying of the Sabbath, and by those who look upon all kinds of legislation on the subject, as a violation of the rights of conscience. The government has an unquestionable right to prohibit, by law, any act, whose tendency is, to injure the health or morals of society; and both these effects are likely to follow a desecration of the Sabbath. As to the question of health, every person of observation must be convinced, that a continuous course of unremitting labor, for a long period, has a strong and direct tendency to waste the energies and prostrate the powers—mental and physical. Powerful constitutions, may, in rare cases, bear up, for a considerable period, against the prostrating tendencies of continuous exertion; and, in like manner, cases may be occasionally found, in which men can endure the loss of sleep for a long time; yet, these are only exceptions to a general rule—in the one case as in the other—and prove nothing against our position. The general tendency, is, evidently, as we have stated; and, hence, the subject is a legitimate one, to be acted on by the civil guardians of the public weal.

Admit that the necessity of a periodical suspension of the ordinary vocations of life, is necessary for man, regarded merely as a citizen of civil community, and then it becomes the duty of the legislature to guard this interest by proper enactments; because, though

all might admit the existence of the necessity, unless controlled, in the matter, by something authoritative, men would be guided by their supposed interests, or convenience, to the sacrifice of higher considerations; and few would find leisure to observe a Sabbath of rest, determined on by their own convenience. And, beside, the thing would be impossible, unless the agreement were universal, or, at least, general, and concurrent, in society; for, so are all the members of society linked together, by business connections and relations, that business could not be carried on, while, say, a seventh part of the community was withdrawn from business, on the first day of the week, another seventh on the second, and so on, through the week. It has, however, been sometimes said, that, as, in this country, a Sabbath is established by the law of common usage, this is sufficient, without any legislative action in the premises; and every one should be allowed, freely, to follow his own interests, or inclinations, on the subject. But, this does not cover the case; for, such a day being established, and generally observed, if the thing is for the good of society, all should be alike required to observe it, that all may occupy a ground of common equality in the matter; and, if it be a wrong to society, it should be suppressed entirely. And a positive good, or evil, to society, it must necessarily be: a *good*, in giving needful and invigorating rest to the bodies and minds of the laboring millions, or an *evil*, in abstracting from society about *fourteen per cent.* of its wealth of labor. But, if the day is to be observed at all, the manner of its observance should be so far regulated

by the government, as, at least, to protect society against moral mischiefs from that source.

To illustrate this point a little more fully, a day, called Christmas, is observed, as the anniversary of the Saviour's nativity, without any intervention of civil authority. This period, particularly in some portions of our country, is observed as a great *gala day*; a day, not only of rest, but of mirth and hilarity. The same general remarks will apply to the anniversary of American Independence. Now, suppose these periods of suspension of the ordinary business of life, to occur at intervals of, say, twenty days, instead of occurring yearly, as at present; and, to be under no control, save the inclinations, passions, and impulses, of the populace; the effect on the morals of society would be mischievous in the extreme, and would soon compel the intervention of the civil authority, to regulate public manners, and correct public morals.

And what would be true in the case supposed, would be equally true of the Sabbath, were it made, by usage, a day of rest from ordinary labor; but, leaving all at liberty to labor or rest, sport or worship, at discretion. Its tendencies would be, to dissipation, riotous conduct, and all manner of social excesses. Hence, it becomes the duty of the governing power, to enact and enforce laws against such conduct—such as disorderly assemblies on that day, selling or buying, and, especially, selling intoxicating drinks—and to enjoin, generally, the orderly observance of the day. Indeed, either this must be done, or the day be abolished, as a day of

general respite from labor, or the public morals must be ruined—at least, injured.

But, legislative action, alone, cannot effect the whole design of the Sabbath. It can recognize the day, and forbid ordinary labor, buying and selling, and such conduct as is injurious to public morals; yet, all this is but of a negative character, and must be very ineffectual, without something of a more positive nature; for, absolute rest, or idleness, is out of the question; men must, by the law of their nature, be employed; the mind will be active, and, generally, the body will be employed about something; and, to enact, therefore, that man *shall not* do certain enumerated acts, on the Sabbath, is, virtually, but to enact, that they *shall do* something else, without determining what that something shall be. And, in a government where entire liberty of conscience is the chartered right of every citizen, the legislature cannot, without invading that sacred right, prescribe particular forms of religious observance, in which the people shall employ themselves while resting from ordinary labor, and by which the day shall be kept holy, in a positive sense. We, then, reach this point: the observance of the Sabbath, as a *civil* institution, should be enforced on community, by the civil authority of the country; because, it comprehends a protection of the rights and morals of the governed, which the government is bound to afford; but, the positive *hallowing* of the day, in the strong sense of that excellent Anglo-Saxon word, is a matter without the legitimate province of civil jurisdiction; and, is, of right, left to the guidance and government of religious

institutions and influences. Most properly, therefore, does the Church, as the guardian of the religious interests of community, enforce a *religious* observance of the Sabbath, on all who place themselves under her, teachings and control. And the co-operative action of the civil and the religious power—the secular and the moral—are necessary to a proper carrying into effect of the letter and spirit of this commandment. For, though the Church may rightfully prohibit, to her members, such violations of the Sabbath as would be properly cognizable by the civil authority, yet, the Church has only a moral authority in the premises, and that extending only to the conduct of her voluntary membership; hence, as a vast proportion of community have not placed themselves under the control and laws of the Church, did not the civil arm sustain its portion of this burden, the multitude would be under no wholesome restraints with regard to it.

CHAPTER X.

THE SABBATH—CONTINUED.

More respectable and common forms of violating the Sabbath—Sabbath Visiting—Sabbath Feasting—Sabbath Travelling—Treating slight diseases on that day—Neglect of children and servants—Sabbath sleeping—Sabbath writing—Works of necessity and mercy to be done—What they are.

IN these rules, “ordinary work” is forbidden; and so are “buying and selling.” But, there are also other forms of Sabbath desecration, not here specifically enumerated; some of which, at least, we shall notice.

First. SABBATH VISITING.

Many persons make it a habit, to do much, or all, their secular visiting on the Sabbath day. Were there no Sabbath, they would be compelled to take time, from the days of labor, to do this; as it is, they appropriate the Lord’s day to that use; and, in all cases where the visiting would be done, at any rate, the Sabbath is used for that purpose, as matter of economy, and is actually of the same pecuniary value to them, as a laboring day; for, one laboring day is thus gained by the operation. Nor does the evil end here; in many cases, this time is taken from the hours of Sabbath devotion, and the house of God is neglected for a social visit, generally

assuming a convivial form. A *Christian* throws his family into confusion, and unquiet agitation, on a Sabbath morning, to prepare for a visit to the country; by which all the calm seriousness, proper to the occasion, is banished. This may be named as the first form of Sabbath desecration, growing out of his *innocent* visit. Then, if the busy confusion of the morning, should not supercede the family devotions entirely, it at least diminishes their reverence and profitableness; and, another evil, is, that the public worship of God is neglected for the day. Probably, too, horses and carriages are to be hired for the occasion; in doing which, the *Christian* “buys” the services of the vehicle and animals, and tempts, and aids the owner in a violation of the Sabbath, by “doing ordinary work therein.” But, suppose he has a conveyance of his own; it makes the matter no better at all; for, He who has forbidden *you* to work on the Lord’s day, has, in the same commandment, made it criminal, in *you*, to withhold the rest of the Sabbath from your *servants* and your *beasts*; and, if you labor not yourself, but require ordinary labor of them, you desecrate the day of the Lord.

Again: your friend, in the country, has been notified of your coming; and, that he may give you a suitable reception, he has declined attendance on the public worship of God; his family is thrown into a most unsabbath-like excitement; the servants, instead of being permitted to rest, or enjoy the privilege of religious worship, are hurrying in all directions, busily employed in preparing luxurious viands, to minister

to the gratification of your appetite. Here it will be seen, that the supposed innocent visit, involves a desecration of the Lord's holy day, in numerous forms. The spirit of this commandment does not, however, prohibit all visiting on the Sabbath; for, it were better, doubtless, when, without public worship on that day, or after public worship, if Christians would more frequently and freely visit each other, than they usually do, to cultivate social Christian feeling, converse about important Christian doctrines, or duties, or experience, to cheer each other with songs of Zion, and like exercises. But, to devise plans, and lay trains, in these Sabbath conversations, for "buying, selling, and getting gain;" or, to enter into idle conversation, in the spirit of levity and irreverence, is contrary to the spirit of the command.

Second. SABBATH FEASTING.

This evil has been directly alluded to above; and, it may, therefore, be sufficient, here, to add, that a habit prevails, to an alarming extent, of making the Sabbath a day of "high feeding;" and many Christians, who are content to live moderately through the week, make it a point to have a more sumptuous dinner on that day, than on any other.

This is clearly wrong: 1st. Because a Christian should feed temperately, at all times; and any departure from his usual habit, in this regard, tends to his injury, in body and mind. 2nd. It gives to the object of feeding the body—even to its detriment—the time God has appointed for ministering to the improvement of the mind, and the cultivation of the

moral affections. 3rd. It requires of servants, and others, the performance of labor which is not necessary on the Lord's day; thus robbing them of rights chartered to them by the Creator, at the same time directly transgressing the Divine command.

If Christ found it necessary to reprove the hospitable Martha, for her excessive attention to the preparation of a frugal repast, for her honored guest, what would he say, were he to enter a Christian's Sunday dining hall, and witness the hurrying to and fro of the servants, and see the table bending beneath the smoking viands of a princely banquet, prepared for the palates of his *humble* followers, who have but just returned from feeding on the bread of the Word; and are now, with higher *gust*, about to luxuriate on the good things of this life!

To provide a necessary quantity of wholesome food, to be used on the Sabbath, is a duty we owe to our nature; and this is classable as a work of necessity; but, far the larger part of this provision for the day, can be made before it arrives; and so it should be. If pious females, who take so much delight in feasting their friends on the Sabbath, did but know, that every enlightened and conscientious minister and member of the Church, enjoys that Sabbath-dinner best, which has employed the least amount of unnecessary Sabbath labor in its preparation, a much larger proportion of *Saturday cooking* would be found on their Sunday dinner tables, than at present. May we hope, that all our ministers will unite in a determined effort, to put down this great evil? It

can be done ; it should be done ; and let us say, by our earnest efforts, it *shall* be done.

Third. TRAVELLING.

Many persons who would not be guilty of Sabbath desecration, in the grosser forms, yet, seem to have no scruples of conscience about travelling on the Lord's day. Some select that day as a suitable time for commencing a journey ; when there is no more necessity, nor just apology, for so doing, than for performing ordinary work at home. But, a larger number, so arrange, in making a journey, that they shall be on the way during the Sabbath ; and so make it equal to any other day, in its business value, to them. This is utterly inexcusable ; especially, in cases where it would not be difficult so to arrange, in advance, as to include no Sabbath in the journey. There is a method of *sanctifying* a desecration of the Lord's day, which may be noticed. A *Christian*, or, perchance, a minister, is on a journey, and, wishing to redeem time, travels, on Sabbath morning, some fifteen or twenty miles on his journey, *to attend public worship* ; and, then, after service, travels as far in the afternoon ; especially, if, at the end of a good day's journey, he can again attend preaching at night. Thus, while he is travelling nearly all the day, with the ostensible object of attending religious worship, he finds, at night, that, by thus doing, he has advanced on his way a full day's journey, and saved a day for secular uses.

It is not, to be sure, quite easy to lay down a rule, applicable to all cases ; for, Christ himself recognized exceptions to general rules of conduct ;

hence, it would be difficult to say, that a Christian, on a long journey, and by public conveyance, over which he has no control, should, under all possible circumstances—whether in the wilderness or the city, at the low tavern, surrounded with the drunken and profane, or in the family of a pious friend—halt, on Saturday evening, and remain until Monday. This may not be duty, in all possible cases; yet, certainly, when it can be done, consistently with the grand design of the Sabbath, and the clear obligations of duty, to cease from his journeying, should be the course pursued by the Christian, and, especially, the Christian minister. But, the decision, in special cases, must be left with the enlightened Christian conscience.

Fourth. The habit of selecting the Sabbath, as a time for “TAKING MEDICINE,” is sufficiently common to call for reprehension.

A man has been suffering a degree of “indisposition,” for some three or four days, and is convinced of the necessity of medical treatment. He is too busy, however, and his time is too precious to admit of his ceasing from his vocation, to receive medical treatment, until the Sabbath; but, when this arrives, the medicine, or the physician, is promptly sent for, and the work of *cure* is diligently pushed forward, that he may be ready to resume his labors on Monday morning.

There are several wrongs in this proceeding, innocent as it is supposed, by many Christians, to be. 1st. The man cannot spare one of *his own days*, but has no scruple about appropriating the *Lord's*

day to the use in question. 2nd. It happens, in many cases, that the patient, by delaying the treatment of his case, to save a day for himself, and take it feloniously from the Lord, brings on a protracted illness, and even death; thus becoming, in a sense, his own murderer, through motives of covetousness or avarice. 3rd. By the prevalence of this habit, physicians are compelled to devote their Sabbaths to the care of Sunday patients, instead of being permitted to attend on the worship of God.

Fifth. THE NEGLECT OF CHILDREN AND SERVANTS.

The man who observes the Sabbath reverently himself, but allows his household to violate it with impunity, is still, in the spirit of the commandment, a Sabbath-breaker; for, the command, directed to the head of the family, embraces children, servants, cattle, and even visitors; he being regarded as the representative, or guardian, of the whole; and, so far as his influence and just authority may be rendered available, he is held under amenability to God, for violations committed by those under his government and care. And it is to be feared, that many professors of religion are guilty, in this matter. Their children, instead of being sent, in the morning, to the Sabbath School—that blessed nursery of piety and religious knowledge—and then being taken to the house of God, under the care of parents or Sabbath School teachers, and taught to reverence the public ordinances of religion, are permitted to roam at large, unrestrained, to mingle in corrupting society, form vicious habits, and imbibe principles ruinous to virtue and good morals.

The servants, instead of being taught *at home*, by the head of the family, or under his (or her) direction, the elements of Christian doctrine, and the personal and relative duties of religion, and being encouraged to attend the preaching of the Word, are turned loose, to wander over the city or country; left to the guidance and government of lawless passions and blind impulses, and to contract habits little less detrimental to the interests of the head of the household, than injurious to themselves. To guard against those errors and evils, so far as in his power, is an important part of the Sabbath duty of every Christian head of a family. It is possible, to be sure—but not very common—to carry even this to an opposite extreme; and, so rigidly to restrict, and confine, those under our care, in a sort of Sabbath imprisonment, as to render its duties irksome, and the day itself a dread and abhorrence to the young. This course is apt to produce re-action of unhappy character and consequence. This, it appears to us, is not inherent in the nature of the institution; and may, generally, if not always, be avoided, by a prudent and judicious course of treatment.

The exercises of the day, should be rather of a cheerful, than of a gloomy kind; and such as shall lead, even the young, to call “the Sabbath a delight.” And this result depends much more on the manner, than the matter, of Sabbath instruction. Much of this should be in an easy, conversational way, calculated to interest the mind, and call its powers into agreeable action. Young persons are ever deeply interested in personal narrative, and of this kind of composition

there is no lack in the Sacred Book; a right appropriation of which, would blend amusement with solid instruction, and, to the young, might be rendered rather a pleasure than an irksome task.

Again: instead of confining children—in whom the love of action is so strongly predominant—throughout the entire day, to a single room, to their great discontent, it is submitted, as a better plan, to take them, at a suitable time in the afternoon, on a cheerful walk; during which, their minds may be interested, with suitable remarks on the works of God, in nature, which spread all around us; and thus the mind may be led, “through nature, up to nature’s God.”

These, however, must be regarded but as brief hints, thrown out suggestively. But, after all, it must be confessed, that there is great difficulty in executing this part of a Christian’s duty; and, that it is much easier to write, or speak plausibly, on the subject, than to practice well those teachings and suggestions.

Sixth. SABBATH SLEEPING.

Another censurable mode of wasting the time of the Sabbath, which may be noticed, is, excessive indulgence in sleep. Many who habitually rise early, when their own concerns are to be attended to, indulge, on the Lord’s day, in sleep, until a very late hour. One effect of this bad habit, is, that time is not allowed for the proper performance of the morning devotions, and for preparing the children of the family for attendance on Sabbath School: and no doubt hundreds—probably thousands—of the

children of Christian parents, are kept from the instructions and benefits of Sunday School, Sabbath after Sabbath, for no other reason, than that their parents are too indolent to leave their beds early enough to "get the children ready." Nay, such is the excess to which this most censurable indulgence is, in many cases, carried, that it is only with hurry and difficulty, that the family can even get themselves ready to attend the services of the house of God. And, not satisfied with devoting the precious Sabbath morning to enervating slumbers—greatly disqualifying for the profitable enjoyment of the religious services of the day—these sluggish Christians are wont, after partaking intemperately of a rich Sunday dinner, again to betake them to their beds, and sleep away the afternoon also. Now, to say nothing of the reverence due the Sabbath, such a course is at variance with the dictates of right reason and human philosophy, as directly as with the command of heaven, and the principles of religion. It is injurious, in breaking in upon the regular habits of rest and rising; it enervates the body; for, rest or food, taken in excess, will produce an effect, the opposite of that for which it is designed; and, perhaps, nothing tends more strongly to mental sluggishness and langour, than excessive sleep. This untimely indulgence, therefore, wholly disqualifies for both the duties and enjoyments of the Sabbath, and is otherwise injurious.

Seventh. SABBATH WRITING.

Some persons who seem to respect the sacredness of the Sabbath, in general matters, yet, feel authorized to set apart a portion of that day, for the purpose

of writing letters partaking of business character ; so, seizing upon the *Lord's* time to do *their* own work in. Some, indeed, take that time to post books, make out accounts, and execute other writings necessary in their business ; but, as such conduct is a clear violation of the civil statute against Sabbath-breaking, we are hardly at liberty to accuse professors of religion with so gross an infraction of the commandment. That which is intended for purposes of religious good, if necessary to be written at all, may be lawfully written on the Sabbath. It is very proper, and profitable, to write memoranda of the religious instructions received from the pulpit, reflections and meditations intended for religious improvement, and, in brief, whatever is in character with the sacredness of the day.

With regard to works of "necessity and mercy," they are admitted, by all, to be lawful on the Sabbath ; and, in many, if not in all cases, to be matter of duty. But, there is, sometimes, difficulty in defining the precise boundary between works which are of this character, and such as are not. Some general suggestions, however, may be safely made. It is a work of mercy, to carry food to the famishing poor, on the Sabbath ; but, if it was your duty to have done this at an earlier day, and you have delayed until the Sabbath, as a matter of convenience to yourself, it is still your duty to do it, because the necessities of a fellow man call for it ; but, little credit will be due you for it, as an act of mercy, or for the keeping of the Sabbath ; while, to the original neglect of duty, in the case, is chargeable the evils which followed. It is a work of necessity, if, on the Sabbath, your

family are without food, and suffering for it, to procure, as best it may be done, the necessary supplies; but, if this destitution be the result of your wilful neglect, if you be not a Sabbath-breaker, you are no better; for, if you have created for yourself a necessity for doing, on the Sabbath, what should have been done before, you only escape the character of a Sabbath-breaker, by placing the guilt on the precedent act which created the necessity.

The question presents itself here, what are "works of necessity and mercy," and what is the proper distinction between the two? Mercy is the exercise of kind offices, in the relief of suffering or distress, and, especially, towards objects of unworthy character. In *this* case, it is applied, without regard to the last point in the above definition; and imports, generally, relief of suffering, of whatever kind. All cases, therefore, of suffering, requiring present relief, are proper to be attended to on the Sabbath, whether the subject be human or inferior animal. With this definition admitted as correct, it would seem that works of *necessity* would comprehend a different class of objects; such as being incapable of suffering, cannot be direct objects of merciful action; such as the saving of property from destruction, in cases of emergency, that may occur on the Sabbath day, as in extinguishing fires, removing property exposed to fire or flood, and acts of like character.

It has been already intimated, that it is the duty of the civil power to restrain from gross violations of the Sabbath, but not to prescribe employment for the day; and, that, as men must be employed on

that day, it is the province of religion to prescribe its appropriate employment. But, this aspect of the subject has been so frequently referred to, incidentally, in the preceding remarks, that little need now be added. Private prayer, family devotion, reading the Word of God, and other good books, attendance on the instructions and ordinances of the Church of God, meditation, profitable conversation, instructing of children and servants, visiting the sick, and relieving the distressed ; these are appropriate employments of the Christian Sabbath ; and the right performance of these, will afford to the mind of the Christian a richer enjoyment than can be drawn from any other appropriation of it, that can be devised or adopted.

CHAPTER XI.

INTEMPERANCE.

Original reading of this rule—Philosophy of intemperance—A social vice, and must be controlled by social instrumentalities—Obligation of temperance men to support temperance organizations—A duty to suppress drinking houses; especially, the more *genteel* ones—Impropriety of the manufacture and sale of spirituous liquors.

“DRUNKENNESS, OR DRINKING SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS, UNLESS IN CASES OF NECESSITY.”

This rule originally read, “Drunkenness, *buying or selling spirituous liquors*, or drinking them, unless in cases of *extreme* necessity;” and it is a matter of just gratulation, that the Methodists, more than one hundred years ago, occupied the high ground, now recently taken by the temperance organizations—the ground of “total abstinence.” And it is to be regretted, that the Church ever consented to relax anything of her original stringency on this subject.

The philosophy of the causes of drunkenness may be briefly stated, thus: 1st. An appetite for spirituous liquors is not natural to man; and, therefore, is, wherever it exists, *artificial* or *acquired*. 2nd. Drunkenness is a *social* vice, into the habit of which, men are drawn by the power of social influences; and, by the force of such habit, the *artificial* appetite is

formed and confirmed. Hence, there is, perhaps, no instance to be produced, in which an individual has contracted the habit of drunkenness, from its very beginning, in *solitude*, or separate from foreign influences operating to lead him in that direction. 3rd. Artificial appetites, when once contracted, are found more uncontrollable, and obstinate, than those which are natural ; for the plain reason, that natural appetites have natural limits, within which it is much less difficult to keep, than to observe moderation in the indulgence of an artificial appetite ; which, being itself *unnatural*, has no natural boundaries to be limited by.

Thus, for illustration, a young man is brought under the power of social influences, which first attract, then excite ; and this excitement amounts to a degree of mental intoxication, which disarms him of his moral defence—a fixed resolve to stand firm in the way of duty and safety. Thus disarmed, and mentally intoxicated by the charm of company, the splendor of the gay saloon, or the bewitching smile of beauty, he partakes of the inebriating draught. The barrier once passed, and the enemy will meet with less resistance, and still less, at each successive assault, until a habit of drinking is formed ; and he drinks from *habit*, until an unnatural *appetite* is created, and then drinks under the cravings of *appetite* ; that appetite is limitless, and its only law is that of quenchless, insatiable thirst. Mental excitement at first led him to drink ; and, now, having formed the habit, and created the appetite, he drinks to *produce* mental excitement. He subsists on preternatural

excitements, and relies on artificial stimuli to produce those excitements.

And, here it may be remarked, that life is sustained by stimuli ; but, while a natural stimulus, such as that produced by partaking of nourishing food, gives strength and healthful vigor to body and mind, an artificial stimulus, of whatever kind, excites, or stimulates, preternaturally, and in much higher degree than the natural. The good effect of the first is permanent, entering, by assimilation, into the substance of the system ; while that of the artificial, *reacts* on both the mind and body—cannot be assimilated into the system, which labors to reject it—and leaves the subject as much below a natural standard of feeling and vigor, as it had elevated him above it. And, in this fact, is to be perceived, the great injury which must, in the nature of the case, result from the use of artificial stimulants. And, at the same time, it must be obvious, that, where artificial stimuli are resorted to, there can be no security against excess ; because, there is no natural boundary to restrain. The acquired appetite demands excitement, and that excitement but inflames the appetite to greater demands ; while each attempt to meet that enlarged demand, only enlarges it still more ; the potion that will afford the desired quantum of excitement to-day, must be increased, to produce the same effect to-morrow ; and the burning and quenchless thirst—like the horse-leach's daughter—unceasingly cries, “Give ! Give !” until the hapless victim, shorn of his strength, perverted in appetite, debased in feeling, and lost to principle, honor, and

duty, sinks beneath the spoiler's tyranny, wrecked and ruined.

If, then, this most ruinous vice comes of a forced appetite, and that appetite is superinduced by the power of social influences; if the appetite be so insatiable in its cravings, how wise and proper is the ground taken in this excellent code—that of total abstinence; for, short of this point, absolute security is not to be found. And, further, in view of the premises above, both the best means of guarding against the evil, and of effecting a cure—where the cases are not absolutely incurable—are plainly suggested. The effects—preventive and remedial—must be directed to the object, of guarding the young against the seductive power of those social influences calculated to lead them into the dangerous snare. There is little danger, that a young man of respectable standing and honorable principles, will be drawn, in the first instance, into a low tippling house, and there be seduced into intemperate habits; because, the whole appearance, society, and accompaniments, are such as strike his feelings repulsively, and present no one attractive feature. There is no social influence there, likely to entice him to evil; for, he feels that the association would degrade and contaminate. But, let him be invited, by some gentleman of commanding influence and position in society, to accompany him to the splendid bar, or elegant drinking room, of a fashionable hotel or coffee house, where drunkenness is never permitted, and only the most gentlemanly behaviour is witnessed; and, while there is much to attract, he perceives nothing repulsive—nothing of

danger—and partakes, without scruple, and without fear; not from a desire to drink, for that he has not; but, from a disposition to comply with what appears but a kind, a generous request, of gentlemen, in whose company he might, very naturally, consider it an honor to be associated.

The acceptance, on his part, of such courtesy, demands of him its reciprocation; and a sense of *honor*, and not inclination, induces him to give the like invitation to those from whom he has received such civility; and, thus early, he becomes a leader of others to the gate of ruin, himself unconscious, yet, that its glittering portals open and gild the entrance to the “sides of the pit.”

Or, let the moral young man attend a convivial party, say, at the house of a gentleman of first respectability; he goes, of course, with a sense of most perfect safety; how could it be otherwise? He goes to the house of an upright and honorable gentleman—perhaps a Christian—and into the society of cultivated and virtuous females; what can he have to fear? Were he in society of questionable character, that fact would arm him against danger; but, *there*, he is off his guard, and his unsuspecting heart is thrown freely open to the pervading influences of the place and the occasion; for, he feels that he is safe, and posts out no sentinels. But, mark the result: the laugh of mirth, the flash of wit, the smile of beauty, the inspiration of music, the general gaiety, the universal excitement; these have gradually, and insensibly, thrown their influences over him, and so gently, so charmingly, that he could not possibly

suspect anything of evil present. He is fully baptized into the spirit of the gay scene ; he has inhaled a gaseous inspiration, until a sweet delirium has pleasantly bewildered his soul, and obscured his moral perceptions. In the midst of this delicious intoxication of the heart, he is approached by a fair *angel* of earth—as he can, just then, readily believe her—who, with charming grace and blandest smile, presents him the wine cup, and asks that he will partake. Her own lip is more deeply rubied by its tint ; and how can he refuse ? The wine sparkles more temptingly in the light of her sparkling eye and wit, and his capitulation is unconditional and instantaneous. The mind was intoxicated before the inebriating bowl began its work, and the chances are, that, on that occasion, he will make rapid advances in the road to ruin, and will soon become fairly matriculated in habits leading to confirmed intemperance.

If this be not the literal history of a large proportion of those who have descended, by the road of drunkenness, to infamy and ruin, it at least exhibits the elements, whose operation, in forms more or less diversified, work out those fearful results, in most cases, if not in all. To guard, then, against the ravages of intemperance, in the young and exposed, every possible care should be taken, to prevent the fatal action of the pernicious social influences adverted to. This work should begin in the family, in the form of social organization first presented to the child's attention ; and there the child should never see any indulgence in the use of intoxicating drinks, which would lead the untaught mind to infer the innocence

of their use. Children believe, until convinced, reluctantly, to the contrary, that all the parent does is entirely right, and may be imitated with perfect safety. Hence, thousands have been led into drunkenness, by the example of parents, who used intoxicating drinks, as a beverage, but who, themselves, were never intoxicated.

You may believe, that *you* can indulge, habitually, and, yet, without danger; yet, if even this were admitted, it is still your sacred duty, to make the sacrifice of abstinence, on the altar of your son's salvation from ruin; for, unless you do so, you have not, and cannot have, the least security, that, some years hence, a bloated, beastialized son, will not point to the temperate drinking of his father, as the first impelling influence which gave a downward direction towards the deep infamy and degradation from which he shall look back, and bitterly curse a *religious* parent's example, as the instrument of his destruction. And religious parents who contend for *moderate* drinking, and practice it, will merit the terrible retribution of fallen and besotted sons; for, they act as if they sought such a result; and, alas, but too surely is this terrible infliction often visited upon them.

The usage has been, as social influences are strengthened and multiplied, in any given case, to increase the use of artificial stimulants in like proportion; and, in accordance with this absurd theory, is the custom still in some places, and with some persons. Hence, the man who performs his solitary labor, without the aid of *spirits*, or once thinking

of them as necessary, would not attempt to have a "corn husking," a "house raising," a "harvesting," or the like, which brings together a number of persons, without providing for the occasion, some kind of intoxicating drink. Herein the laws of a sound philosophy are directly contravened; for, while there can be no more necessity for this beverage, in a large company, than in solitary labor, the danger of excessive indulgence is increased very much in the proportion of numbers. So, the family, that has no use for intoxicating beverages, on ordinary occasions, would feel quite scandalized to have a wedding, or a "party," without a suitable supply of wines, brandies, and the rest. If we look to complete sobriety in the country, as an object to be labored for, these improprieties must be abandoned; and, especially, must every Christian set his face, like flint, against even the *moderate* use of spirits, and particularly against their use, in circumstances where social influences combine to strengthen our enemy, and, therefore, render the measure more dangerous.

A very important part of this duty, is, to employ all lawful efforts for the suppression of houses for retailing intoxicating drinks, and, above all, those of the respectable and fashionable sort. Many men may be found, who are quite ready to join in a spirited crusade against low tippling houses, kept by ruffians, and patronized by the abandoned and vulgar, who will, with equal spirit, resist any attempt to curtail the privileges of the elegant coffee house, or fashionable drinking saloon, under an impression, that

the former, and not the latter, are doing all the mischief in society—making all the drunkards.

This is utterly a mistake; few, if any drunkards, are “manufactured from the *raw material*,” at the low grog-shops. True, when they become either too poor, or too degraded, for the higher circles of respectable drunkenness, they are kicked out of the fashionable drinking house, where *gentlemen* only are allowed to get drunk, in a decent and respectable way; and then they are advanced, by a regular graduation, to a place among drunkards, at a filthy dram-shop. But, in point of fact, one fashionable bar will be found to *matriculate* more “freshmen” into the school of drunkenness, than ten of the most loathsome grog-shops to be found. Your son may visit the latter, and, not improbably, his sense of moral propriety and common decency would be so shocked, as to produce disgust and loathing; but, in the other case, the inviting elegance of the establishment, the gentility of the company, and the whole assemblage of circumstances, would be likely to exert an attractive influence over the youthful mind, well calculated to bewilder and lead astray. Christians, patriots, and lovers of order and morality, owe it to the Church and the world, to the present generation and those future, to make a determined effort, to guard against the spread of this alarming evil.

So much for the proper means of preventing intemperance; and, for the means of remedy, or cure, we must look to the same elementary principles. If intemperance be a *social vice*—that is, dependent

on social influences for its production—then, the only effectual remedy must be sought in social influences of a counteracting character. The influence, direct and mediate, of other men, has operated to drag the victim down from his proper place in society, and the influence of others must be employed, for his elevation to his lost position.

In this view of the subject, all organizations which tend to embody public sentiment against the evil of intemperance, and, at the same time, aid and encourage the victim, in his effort to recover from the snare of the enemy, ought to be liberally encouraged. Temperance organizations have done much good, both in protecting against danger, and in restoring the fallen; and, whatever apparent force there may seem to be, in the objections commonly urged against them, none can avail to excuse a Christian, or patriot, from co-operating, if he believes that, in so doing, he can do good to himself or others.

The cause, in organic form, has suffered much, from the standing aloof of many who take their stand, on the plea, that, being themselves entirely temperate, they have no need to protect themselves by a public pledge; and, that, in signing one, they would seem to acknowledge their inability to live soberly without that aid, and would classify themselves with the intemperate, or, at least, with reformed drunkards, which they are unwilling to do.

To this argument it may be sufficient to reply:—

1st. That the absolute safety of any man, who allows himself to indulge in intoxicating drinks,

however moderately, must be looked on as a questionable matter.

But, 2nd. Suppose his own safety does not require the measure, perhaps that of his family does ; for, children, finding their parents in that habit, infer that it is right ; and, not having discernment to discriminate between the *moderate* and *immoderate* use of the article, (and, indeed, few, if any, have,) they are easily led to pass over the limits of moderation, far enough to form an appetite for alcohol, and then the case is well nigh desperate. And, indeed, it is difficult to conceive of a more certain and effectual mode of making drunkards, than that of some *temperate* men and professors of religion, in attempting to cast odium on temperance movements, by way of protecting themselves in their course of refusing their co-operation.

3rd. One grand object of these organizations, is, to lead the fallen back to virtue and temperance ; and this cannot be done, unless the lost can be induced to feel the sentiment of self-respect, which is not to be effected by putting them off from the respectable portion of society, into a class composed, exclusively, of "reformed drunkards." This would be, to mark them as a distinct, and, in some degree, odious *caste*, unfit to be associated with any other class ; or, at best, doing *quarantine* duty, until it shall be proved that they have become disinfected of their moral leprosy. When, however, upon a pledge of determination to reform, they are incorporated with a respectable organization, comprehending the best, most temperate, and honorable members of the community,

they feel that they are not friendless and outcast, and an ennobling feeling of self-respect is the effect. How much concern, then, has he, for the reformation of the intemperate, and the well-being of society, who regards his morning dram, his brandy at dinner, or his glass of wine, too great a sacrifice to be made for the recovery of the fallen, and the good of his species? And, yet, it is but too probable, that there are Church-members, and professors of the religion of Christ, in this unenviable category.

As to the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors, by professors of religion, it is certainly out of character, and, at once, calculated to bring odium on religion, and to strengthen the cause of intemperance. There are many persons, not professing religion, who are conscientiously opposed to such conduct; and, when men say, "I am not a professor of religion; but, I would not be guilty of what your Church-members do," then is Christ's cause wounded, in the house of his professed friends.

So, again, when the grog-shop keeper is admonished of the impropriety and injurious effects of his calling, he feels himself mailed, in stronger than steel armor, when he can say, "Professors of religion make it, and professors of religion sell it to me, at wholesale; but I, being too poor to deal in it, on so large a scale, only sell, in smaller quantities, to others, what your good Church-members have sold to me."

Now, suppose it were admitted, that the acts in question are not positively unlawful, in the light of God's Word; yet, certainly they are highly

“inexpedient,” as being calculated to bring dishonor on the holy religion of the Lord Jesus. And, if the honor of God, and the interests of man, demand the sacrifice, where is the friend of the Saviour who will refuse to offer the oblation on the altar of duty?

CHAPTER XII.

SLAVERY.

Mr. Wesley made no rule on the subject—This rule first appeared in the Discipline of 1789—original form of it—By whom enacted? Not by General or Annual Conference, proved—not by the Council, clearly proved—It was introduced by the Bishops—It referred to the African Slave Trade—proved by seven arguments—Objection concerning *Bishops' Notes* answered—Wickedness of the African Slave Trade—opposition of Southern States to it—Early rules of the Methodist Episcopal Church found impracticable—Duty to submit to the laws, in matters of civil relation—Examples of Christ and Apostles.

“THE BUYING AND SELLING OF MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN, WITH AN INTENTION TO ENSLAVE THEM.”

Here we encounter a subject of great difficulty and delicacy, in the treatment of which, it is not easy to do good, nor even to avoid doing injury. Mr. Wesley, in his General Rules, makes no reference to the question, though slavery existed, at that time, in many provinces of the British Empire, including the American Colonies. And, indeed, in this, he but followed the example of the Saviour, who found slavery a civil and social institution, existing, extensively, in the Roman Empire; but gave no precept, no approbation, no prohibition, directly, on the subject; but left it to the civil power, and the action of moral principles inculcated by him.

We have said, Mr. Wesley gave his societies no rule on the subject of slavery; how, then, comes this rule to be incorporated with those of Mr. Wesley? This question cannot be answered with certain accuracy; yet, what is known, shall be presented to the reader. This item first appeared among the General Rules, in the Discipline of 1789, and it then read, “The buying, or selling, *the bodies and souls* of men, women, or children, with an intention to enslave them.” In 1792, the words, “the bodies and souls,” were omitted; and, since 1808, the rule has stood as at present.

But, by whom it was introduced, is not matter of record; and must, at this distance of time, be disposed of, rather by weighing probabilities, than by any certain evidence. It is certainly known, that it was not done by the action of any Conference: for, prior to 1792, there had been but one General Conference—that of 1784, and that a mere assembly of unordained preachers—and the Annual Conferences never had this rule before them for action. It is, therefore, evident, that it was introduced, either by the Bishops’ Council—a body which had met but twice—or by the Bishops alone.

A presumption has been raised in favor of the supposition, that the Council adopted this rule, from the fact, that the first meeting of that body was held in that year, (1789.) But, this, to us, appears a groundless presumption; because, 1st. The Council had no power to enact, but only to propose laws, to the Annual Conferences, which those Conferences must first concur in, before they could take effect; and,

as this rule was never submitted to those Conferences, the conclusion is necessary, that it was not the act of the Council. 2nd. Mr. Lee, in his History of Methodism, gives us the minutes of the acts of that Council, in full; and, in those minutes, there is no notice of this rule; therefore, it could not have been adopted by that body. 3rd. The meeting of the Council was held, December 1st, 1789; and the edition of the Discipline, in which this rule first appeared, bears date, "1789;" and it is very improbable, that the Discipline should have been published between the adjournment of the Council (say 5th or 6th December,) and the end of the same month, which must have been the case, for the Discipline to be dated 1789. 4th. We have before us, a Discipline of 1789, on the title-page of which is the following writing: "Benjamin Blunt, His Book, bought October 30th, 1789; price 3s." This settles the question, that Mr. Blunt purchased the Discipline of 1789, more than a month before the time at which the Council held its first session.* The conclusion, therefore, seems irrevocable, that this rule was introduced by the Bishops. And this opinion receives support, from the following circumstances:—

The stringent rule of 1784 stood permanently suspended, leaving nothing in the Discipline on

* On a closer inspection of this Discipline, we find the Preface dated, "Charles Town, March 20th, 1789," and signed, "Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury" This, effectually and finally, settles the controversy.

slavery, or the slave trade ; the Bishops were, then, for the first time, about to publish the General Rules in the Discipline ; and, as the government had taken action on the general subject, the Bishops seem to have thought it expedient, that the Discipline should not go abroad, without any thing at all bearing on the subject ; and, therefore, added this rule, which the next General Conference, of 1792, slightly modified and retained. So much for the history of this rule, which has been more generally approved, and much longer retained, than any other ever enacted by the Church on this general subject.

We next inquire into the immediate object, and legitimate meaning of the rule. The civil power of the country, then recently organized as a constitutional Republic, had, just before this time, enacted, in the organic law of the government, virtually, that the traffic between this country and Africa—which had long existed, and by which “men, women, and children,” were bought and sold, “for the purpose of *enslaving* them” in this country—should cease at a given period. In this state of affairs, it was thought expedient, by the Episcopacy, to take such action as would be a suitable response of the Church, to the action of the newly constituted government on this important subject. And when the great *zeal* of the Episcopacy, with regard to the whole subject of slavery, is considered, it seems very probable, that it would not willingly be behind the civil government, in a disapproval of the African slave trade, or be backward in expressing the Church’s approval and

co-operation in the action of the state, for the suppression of that nefarious traffic.

The rule has been made to apply to buying and selling "men, women, and children," who are already in slavery, as slavery is practiced in this country; but, that the rule originally referred, specifically, to the African slave trade, appears quite clear, and for the following reasons:—

First. The sense of the language requires this construction.

To say that the drunkard is a slave to his appetite, is correct enough; but, to say of the man who gives to a confirmed drunkard the means of continuing in his drunkenness, that he "*enslaves*" him to that vice, is incorrect; because, a slave cannot be *enslaved*—that is, made a *slave*—for this embraces the idea of previous freedom. A slave is not *enslaved* by the continuance of this slavery, no more than a *captive* can be *captured* by a simple continuation of his captivity. The prefix *en*, means to *make*, or to *do*: so we *ensnare* what was out of the snare; *entomb* what was before not in the tomb; *enliven* what before was lifeless or dull; *ensure* what was uncertain, and so the rest.

Second. The subject of domestic slavery, as it exists in this country, has been acted on, and spoken of in various aspects, by the Church authorities, very frequently—not less than twenty times—and, in some instances, at much length; yet, the term *enslave* is never used officially, except in this instance; and but once beside, at all; and, in that case, (the Bishops' sub-note on this General Rule) it is employed

to signify taking from slaves freedom of conscience, and the privilege of worshipping God, which belong, inherently, to human nature, as well in bodily slavery as in a state of freedom. "We must give credit," say the Bishops, "to the multitude who do not enslave *the minds* of their servants, but allow them full liberty to attend the preaching of the gospel, *wherever* they think they can be most benefitted." So, that, in the only cases in which the term is used officially, or semi-officially, it clearly means, *reducing* to slavery; in one case, of the body, in the other, of the mind.

Third. The character of the previous legislation of the Church, conclusively proves the same thing.

In 1780, the Conference took action on the subject, in which they said, "We pass our *disapprobation* on all our friends who keep slaves, and advise their freedom." In 1783, local preachers, who held slaves, were threatened with *suspension*, unless they gave freedom to their slaves. In the very stringent action of the Conference of 1784, it was not only provided that those who held slaves should emancipate them, where the laws should permit, but ordained, that "those who *buy* or *sell* slaves, or give them away—unless they buy them on purpose to free them—are to be immediately expelled." This enactment, no doubt brought about by Dr. Coke, it was soon found, *could not be enforced*; and, accordingly, at the next Conference, (May, 1785,) only six months after the passage of the rule, its action was suspended, and never again revived. The suspending action of the Conference of 1785, distinctly embraces "the minutes

on slavery;" and, of course, by fair construction, the part respecting "buying and selling." This affords evidence, that the General Rule, adopted some five years afterwards, did not refer to the same point; for, if the rule of 1784 was *not* suspended, then, there was a most stringent law of the Church, in force, at that time, against *buying and selling* slaves; and, it cannot be credited, that, with such a law already in force, the Bishops would take it upon themselves to enact another law on the same subject, without the co-operation of the Conferences; and, especially, a law, more or less in conflict with the existing one. And, if that law, (of 1784) was, at the time, actually suspended, can it be supposed, that the Bishops, without the Conferences, would enact a law against buying and selling, when that enacted by the only General Conference, that had, then, ever met, could not be enforced, and had to be suspended in six months?

Fourth. The language of the Bishops' notes, on this General Rule, are to the same point. They style the rule "a small addition, which the *circumstances of the States required.*" What special "circumstances of the States" can be alluded to, as "requiring this small addition" to the General Rules? Not the Declaration of Independence; for this had preceded the offensive action of 1784, by eight years. It must have been the prospective prohibition of the slave trade with Africa.

Fifth. *After* the introduction of this rule, the General Conference enacted a law, on the subject of buying and selling slaves, in the common meaning

of the phrase ; which, however, a subsequent General Conference repealed. Why this legislation, if the general rule covered the subject ? Or, if something fuller was needed, in addition to the rule, why was that additional law repealed ? If the general rule covered the case, at the time of the repeal, it did at the time of enactment ; and, if it did not meet the case of ordinary buying and selling, at the enactment, it did not at the repeal. Consistency seems, therefore, to demand the construction above.

Sixth. Many years after the rule was introduced, and, after it had become a part of the constitution of the Church, by the action of the General Conference of 1808, a law was enacted in the words following : “The General Conference authorizes each Annual Conference, to form their own regulations relative to buying slaves.” Now, if the “buying and selling” here named, be the same intended in the General Rule, then, while the *constitution* made buying and selling slaves criminal, and prescribed the mode of treatment and penalty, the General Conference authorized the Annual Conferences to adopt “their own regulations” on the subject ; and so authorized them to pass acts contrary to the constitution.

Seventh. In all the explanatory and declaratory acts of the General Conference, not one makes any allusion to this rule, as applying to the domestic purchase and sale of slaves. And, though the Church has found all other laws on the subject impracticable, and has been constrained to repeal them—showing, conclusively, that this rule was not regarded as occupying common ground with those

other laws—it has never been proposed to repeal this, for any such reason.

Eighth. Mr. Lee, who well understood the subject, says, in his History, (p. 102,) that, at the General Conference of 1808, “The greater part of the rule about slavery was abolished, and *no part of it was retained, respecting private members.* The part retained in our Discipline, only relates, at present, to our travelling preachers, and to such other persons as are to be brought forward to official stations in our Church.” Now, this statement of our early and faithful historian, cannot be true, unless the construction given above, of this general rule, be the correct one; for, the connection of his remarks, will show, conclusively, that, in speaking of the “rule about slavery,” his allusion is specially to the matter of buying and selling.

It is said, however, that, as the Bishops, who are supposed to have originated this rule, have, in their notes on it, introduced the subject of *slavery* broadly, that they must have understood it in a sense of larger latitude, than that we have allowed to it. To this, we respond: 1st. That, as the Bishops saw proper to make no note, whatever, on the Section on Slavery, in the Discipline of 1796, this was found the only other point, at which any notes on the subject, could, with any semblance of propriety, be introduced. 2nd. The Bishops, in their notes on the place, say not a word about the domestic slave trade, or buying and selling slaves at all. 3rd. They make it the occasion, for urging on masters the duty of providing for the religious instruction of their

slaves; and, of commanding those who do, and condemning those who do not, as guilty of *enslaving* the mind.

Now, whatever else the rule implies, it certainly does not, in itself, contain any precept on the important subject, of the duty of masters to give religious instruction to their slaves. Hence, we see, that the introduction of the general subject in the rule, is made the occasion, by the Bishops, of offering such general remarks on the subject of slavery, and the duties growing out of the relation, as they judged it expedient to make in their notes.

These remarks are made, not for the purpose of evading the rule, but of ascertaining its true origin and import.

For many years, we have had no law of the Church applying to ordinary dealings in slaves, and probably it had been better, that we never should have had any such. Not that we are disposed to encourage that traffic, but the reverse—and the reverse is generally true, among Southern Christians—but, because it is impossible to regulate this matter by ecclesiastical action; for it involves a civil relation, with which the Church cannot safely intermeddle.

That the capturing of the African, by violence, in his own country, and without offence, on his part, and *enslaving* him in a foreign land, was prompted by a lawless lust of gain, and was a flagrant violation of the common rights of human nature, is conceded by all, excepting only a few visionaries, who pretend

to find, in his complexion, and slight peculiarities in his conformation, evidence, not only of his inferiority to the other races, but of his original destination to servitude and bondage; but, as this theory is at variance, alike with common sense, sound philosophy, and the sacred Scriptures, and finds as little favor with the intelligent of the South as the North, it is not necessary to give it any other attention, than utterly to disclaim it as a doctrine of the South. And, that slavery in the United States—the fruit of the original wrong-doing just now referred to, is “a great evil”—as it is expressed in our Discipline—is a sentiment that meets a ready response in nearly all Southern hearts. Politically, it is an evil: its tendencies are to social evil, and, in many instances and respects, to moral evil. But, to say that it is, necessarily, in itself, a moral evil—that is, sinful in those involved in it—is certainly going much too far.

Slavery was introduced into this country, during its colonial subjection to Great Britain; and it was done, not by our colonial government, but by the supreme authority of the British Crown, and against the earnest and oft-repeated remonstrances of the Colonies, and particularly of Virginia, whose Legislature remonstrated against it, probably, more than twenty times. In the Northern States, slave labor was early found to be unprofitable; and slavery was, consequently, transferred Southward; but, so long as the slave trade was not a high penal offence against the laws of the land, Northern capital and enterprize continued to be actively embarked in the

importation of slaves from Africa into the Southern States. Now, the traffic is interdicted by law; and its permanent fruits, and more immediate evils, have fallen to the South, while its profits have been made the inheritance of the North. With what justice, then, can the North denounce the South, for tolerating a state of things against which the South protested, and which the North actively aided, if not to introduce, at least to strengthen, and render permanent?

But, the evil is among us, and not by the will, or action, of the present generation, North or South; and the important question is, what is our duty in relation to this subject, as Christian Churches and individual Christians? The answer from the abolitionists of the North, is, "Denounce it, in all its forms, as *sin*, and withdraw Christian fellowship from all slaveholders." This may do for declamation, to inflame one portion of our country against another; but is not reasonable, practicable, nor in accordance with Apostolic example. Our own Church commenced, early, a very stringent course of action on this subject, but was compelled to abandon it, because it was utterly impracticable, and tended to bring the Church into conflict with the civil authorities of the country. True, in her most stringent rules, she always made exceptions of the cases wherein the laws of the States did not permit emancipation; yet, the agitation of the subject, the denouncing, in strong terms, what the States did not believe it possible to rid themselves of, and like measures, tended to awaken jealousies on the part of civil

rulers, and cut us off from access to master and slave, and, so, greatly to curtail our usefulness in that large field of labor.

It has, to be sure, been said, and often repeated, that the laws of the States do not require men to become slaveholders; and, therefore, for the Church to forbid their becoming such, cannot, in any manner, conflict with the civil laws. But, this is an unfair statement of the case; men are daily made owners of slaves, without their consent—by inheritance, by bequest, &c., and some of the States, as Georgia, deeming the emancipation of slaves, among them, injurious to society, and not beneficial to the subjects, have enacted laws against emancipation, and made the act penal. Now, though the law does not enjoin, that a man shall become a slaveholder, yet, its *action*, in innumerable instances, does make him such; and, when the relation is established, it makes it penal in him to attempt its dissolution.

Now, in the matter of a civil relation, it cannot be a Christian's duty to resist civil authority, in obedience to an ecclesiastical behest on the same subject. This is Papal doctrine. Such was not the example set us by Jesus Christ: he may have looked upon the abstract right of the Roman Emperor, to exact tribute from Israel, as without any foundation in justice; yet, when called on, in obedience to the law under which he lived, to pay the exaction, he scrupled not to do it, and to work a miracle to raise the money. So, too, he found slavery in that Empire, in its severest form; a form, in which the master might take the life of the slave, without

legal censure; yet, instead of harshly and bitterly denouncing the relation as criminal, he touches it not in its *distinctive* character, civil or moral; but, both he and his Apostles lay down the great principles of moral conduct, governing all the relations of life and society, and leave these to work out their own legitimate results, on the hearts and lives of all. The relation, as it involves moral obligations, is freely treated, and the duties of master and servant are plainly laid down, and strictly enforced.

CHAPTER XIII.

SLAVERY—CONTINUED.

Church legislation not advisable; the example of Christ and his Apostles preferable—Difficulties of Emancipation—This is not the whole duty of the master, and may be even wrong—Duty of master respecting religious training of slaves—to make them a part of his household, in religious matters—Case where they are too numerous for this arrangement—where slaves are on a distant estate—master bound to provide a good and faithful manager—Duty to employ a missionary—Importance of the missionary work—Suggestions as to the manner of its successful performance.

WITH regard to Church action, on the subject of slavery, it can hardly be doubted, that, had we, following Christ and the primitive Church, in earnestly and constantly urging attention to the duties growing out of it, on servants and masters, without attempting any legislation on the civil relation itself, it had been much better for all concerned. True, we might, with all propriety, adopt a rule, like the one we are now considering, against *enslaving* human beings—because, that is “man-stealing,” against which the New Testament bears testimony—and such a rule may be safely followed by any Christian Church; but, this is wholly different from an attempt to control a civil relation, which neither the Church nor our government created, nor have they been able to see any way of dissolving it.

It is easy to denounce and condemn, but more difficult to provide a remedy for the evil complained of. A very large proportion of the slave-owners of the South have become such, without any act of their own to that end; and, if the simple holding of slaves be sin, how are they to become "free from sin?" If you say, "By emancipation," the answer is, that, in some of the States this is positively prohibited; and, in others, is so embarrassed by the disabilities of the emancipated slave, and liabilities of the master, as to amount to a moral prohibition. Is it said, these may be evaded by sending the slaves to a "free State?" Yet, this is attended with serious difficulties. The master may be unable to sustain the expense; but, if otherwise, in sending his slaves to a distant State, he must, in nearly all cases, break up the relation of husband and wife, and separate parents from children. Again: slaves sent to *free States*, especially, if there be any considerable number together, find no resting place for the sole of their foot, and are hunted from place to place, with a spirit almost unknown in the South; and, in the average of cases, are in much worse condition than the slaves of the South.

But, the main point is this: if a conscientious, Christian man, comes into possession of slaves, he feels that he is bound to provide for their temporal wants; to protect, as far as possible, the sanctity of their domestic relations, and to attend, carefully, to their religious instruction and training for heaven. These solemn responsibilities are upon him, and he is bound, in good conscience, to meet and fulfil

them. Who, in the “free States,” will take from him a transfer of these serious obligations? Providence has made him the guardian of those poor Africans, and he dare not shrink from the unwelcome responsibility, until his wards be properly provided for—temporally and spiritually—without his care. To turn them loose on society, without the restraints of bondmen, or the motives and privileges of freemen, is a short method of disposing of the difficulty, and, in many instances, a *cheap* one, compared with the opposite course; but, in many cases, an enlightened and tender conscience cannot feel quit of its burden of duty, by such a course. It is the duty of the owner, not to allow his slaves to pass from under his control, until he can have reasonable assurances, that they will be provided for, as he feels it *his* duty to provide for them. Suppose, for example, the *infidel wing* of abolitionism should propose to a Christian slave-owner, to take his charge off his hands, and provide for them; could his conscience be satisfied, by putting them into the hands of men who would teach them to “despise government,” contemn the Church, the Sabbath, and all the ordinances of Christianity? Surely not. The judge of all the earth would hold him answerable for such a prostitution of the power put into his hands for the benefit of others.

But, if it is the duty of the master, not to resign his control and responsibility, without a suitable guaranty, that the duties he owes to his slaves will be faithfully met in some other way, he is clearly bound, while he holds the relation, to discharge his

duty in it, with fidelity and honesty. Many fall short in this particular; and to this point should the efforts of Christians, and of the Church, collectively, be particularly directed. To provide your servants with comfortable clothing, wholesome food, and suitable lodging, and not to allow them to be over-worked, or deprived of necessary rest; these are duties of the master, to be sure, but such as are also dictated by interest and selfish considerations, and only he who is blind alike to duty and interest, or grossly brutalized in his feelings, can wilfully violate them. But, there are duties beside and above these, which demand his care.

And, perhaps, all these may be comprehended, in regarding his servants as constituting part and parcel of his *own family*, and to treat them accordingly. It was God's high commendation of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his *children* and his *household* (servants) after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." And Joshua's pious resolution, "As for me and my *house*, (entire family) we will serve the Lord," has very properly been regarded as a model to be followed by all good men, placed in the headship of families or households. These pious patriarchs evidently placed children and servants in the same category, as it regards religious training; and, in the Decalogue, the duty of the head of the family to keep holy the Sabbath, is not performed by his personal obedience to the law alone, but is extended, through him, to "his *son* and his *daughter*, his *man servant* and his *maid servant*; and these two classes

of dependents—*children* and *servants*—are placed in the same relation to him, as concerning the commandment. So far as practicable, it is his duty to impart religious instruction, *personally*, to his servants. He is personally responsible, and should meet as much of the duty as practicable, by his own personal efforts, and those of his own family; and then call to his aid, such other helps as may be within his reach. Daily should he call together his children and servants, to hear the Word of God, sing his praise, and kneel together at a common altar, to offer joint devotions to heaven; but, especially, should this be done on the Sabbath, and catechetical, and general instruction, should be superadded.

Whenever opportunity offers, servants should be encouraged to attend public worship. And a part of that encouragement should be, to provide them with such decent apparel, as shall not subject their feelings to mortification, in appearing in a public assembly of worshippers. It is, also, a useful measure, to question them freely and plainly, on their return from public worship, about the discourse, and other religious exercises, and what they have not understood fully, explain to them; what they have understood, enforce, affectionately, on their minds and consciences. Let your whole course convince them, that you are deeply concerned for their eternal welfare. It will not do for you to release yourself from these duties, on the ground that you have a missionary, whose special business it is, to attend to the religious concerns of servants; his duties are too general, and occasional, to release

you, and the co-operation of both is necessary to the success of this great work. Many Christians, it is to be feared, greatly neglect their duties to those thus placed under their guardianship; yet, there are many bright and commendable examples of an opposite character. Many masters have the spiritual care of their servants ever on their hearts, as the burden of the Lord, and diligently fulfil the onerous task. And, it needs not to be remarked, that such ever have the most obedient, agreeable, and dutious servants. Into this field of labor—one of the most important and promising—many of the daughters of the South have entered, with noble zeal and glorious success. On each return of the Sabbath, dignified matrons, occupying the upper circle in society, may be seen, surrounded by a large group of dark, cheerful faces; and the eyes of the servants are unto their mistresses for spiritual food, and she giveth them their portion in due season. Aye, and even young ladies of refinement, high mental culture, and large fortune, may be seen, ennobling themselves by teaching classes of negro children the way to the cross and heaven. How holy and appropriate the vocation? Never can a young lady appear to better advantage, in the eyes of earth and heaven, than when employed in breaking the bread of life to the poor; it is *then*, surely, if ever on earth, that she may be regarded as an *angel*; an angel of mercy and comfort to the needy, and such as look up to her as their natural guide and helper. Would that we could number thousands of such young ladies where now we number tens. The cause is good, the

work important, the reward glorious. Better have the "blessing of those who are ready to perish," than the hollow adulation of a thousand foplings, or the intoxicating admiration of the gay and unthinking.

It may be difficult, or impracticable, to apply the whole of these remarks to cases where servants are too numerous to be organized as a common household; yet, the principle is the same in the one case as in the other, only, different circumstances call for a different mode of bringing the principle into practical operation. Where servants on an estate are quite numerous, they usually consist of household servants—who should be brought under the religious discipline of the house—and of laboring, or plantation hands, residing, it may be, some distance from the family mansion, but usually near to each other. All these, if not remote, may be brought under the Sabbath arrangements suggested; and, for the daily religious worship, there will, generally, be found among them, or on the premises, some pious aged servant, in whom the others have confidence, and who would, cheerfully, offer up the morning and evening prayer in behalf of the whole.

But, where plantations, employing many servants, are situated remote from the proprietor—perhaps in a distant State—the case assumes a different phase; but, not one that releases the master from any of his moral responsibilities to his servants. These rest still upon him, and he must meet them according to the circumstances. And, first, it is his duty, if not under his own inspection, to place them under the care of a prudent, kind, firm manager, and,

if *possible*, one who is a true *Christian*. That man is his representative; and if he wilfully appoint one who is oppressive, unkind, or who will restrict the servants in their religious rights, and set before them a demoralizing example, the master is answerable to God, for the consequences of the crimes of his agent. He is, therefore, bound, in duty and conscience, to employ the best man he can procure, for the responsible place; and, if he find himself deceived in the character of the man he has appointed his agent, duty requires his prompt dismissal.

Some men seem to estimate the value of a manager, by his severity and boisterousness—than which, a greater error could not be fallen upon. A cruel man can govern only by fear and force, and a blustering, boisterous man, cannot govern at all. He may scold, threaten, whip, but will be neither loved, feared, nor obeyed. The mild, firm, quiet man, himself governed always by principle—not by gusts of passion—who requires only what is reasonable, and makes it a matter of principle and conscience, to be obeyed in what he does require, will do more by a word, or even a look, than the other can effect by whatever means. Observe the masters of steamboats and other vessels, and the proof of what has been said will at once appear. Wherever the master's voice is heard loud, angry, and frequent, you find no order, no obedience, no efficiency; but, in the instances in which you have to inquire, to find out who the master is—where he is seldom heard, and then in a tone firm, but unexcited, and only loud enough to be heard by

the persons addressed—you may look, with confidence, for energy, discipline, and system.

Where a manager of the proper type—prudent and religious—is employed, he will do his duty, both to his employer and those under him, from principle; and is worth any possible number of the profane, selfish, and irreligious men, sometimes found in the management of the property and servants of religious men. Such a man, too, will delight in giving religious instruction himself, so far as may be in his power, to the servants under his care.

This is one part of an owner's duty, in the case stated; but, another is, to make more direct provision for the religious teaching of his laborers, by providing for them suitable ministerial attention. This is alike matter of duty and interest; and many proprietors, who, themselves, take no direct interest in religious matters, yet, from motives of interest, alone, and avowedly, have erected places of worship on their estates, and employ, at their individual cost, missionaries, to instruct their people by preaching, catechizing, conversation, prayer, &c.; and such men will tell you, that the money thus laid out, is capital most profitably invested; that the effect is, to make the servants more happy, in themselves, and more faithful, governable, and useful, to their owners. If, then, mere worldly policy prescribes and approves the measure, as one of temporal advantage and gain, what can be said in defence of the professed Christian master, whose religion does not carry him as far, in the direction of duty to his servants, as motives of naked interest carry the professed worldling

in the same direction? And are there, indeed, such Christians? It is even to be feared there are. Theirs is a fearful responsibility; the worldly wise of this generation, shall arise, in the judgment, and condemn them.

Since we have taken so wide a latitude, in treating of this subject, we may yet go a little way farther, and say a few words with regard to this missionary work just before mentioned. It is a great work, and peculiarly devolved, by the Providence of God, on the Southern Church generally, and, specially, on the Southern Methodist Church. The connexional unity of the Church has been severed, avowedly, for the religious benefit of the slave population. It was because of a belief, that a continuance of the former jurisdictional connection would bar the door of access to master and slave, and, especially, the latter through the former, that we submitted to the painful necessity of separation; and, in consequence of this sacrifice in the cause of the slave, doors, and arms, and ripened fields, have been thrown open to our ministry, all over the South. This broad field had, in a great measure, remained uncultivated; and, while we were zealous in sending the gospel to the destitute in foreign lands, foreigners pointed, with keen reproach, to millions of slaves in our own country, either entirely destitute, or imperfectly supplied with the means of religious improvement. Now the way is open, and God hath given us a mighty work to do. Upon this work we have entered, with some spirit and zeal, and, we may add, with encouraging success; but, we are yet in our infancy,

and have nearly every thing to learn, and there is great danger that we may err, and even do injury where we would do good.

A few plain suggestions we propose. Whoever goes into this work, should feel that it is one of the most important, most difficult, and most honorable, in which a messenger of Christ can be engaged. The idea, that any sort of man will do well enough to preach to the blacks, though unacceptable to enlightened white congregations, must be banished entirely and for ever. It is a false opinion; for, many acceptable and useful ministers among the whites, are utterly unfit for usefulness among the blacks. As few learned men possess the rare talent of preaching usefully and intelligibly to children, for the same reason few men can so address the blacks, as to convey to their minds clear apprehensions of gospel truth and Christian duty. Plain, but pure and chaste language, should be used; and the preacher should not be satisfied, until he is fully understood by his hearers. Here, then, humility is required; for the fashion of the times is, to look upon that man, only, as a great preacher, who employs a style highly embellished with the beauties of rhetoric, and the elegancies of diction. For all this pompous display, the missionary to the plantations has no more use, than his Master had, in preaching from his mountain pulpit, or from the fishing boats of Gennesaret. *He*, therefore, especially, must subscribe to the doctrine, that, at least, in this respect, the "Servant is not above his master, nor the discipline above his Lord." Any man who looks on

this work as in any sense ignoble, is utterly unworthy a place in it. He that is really worthy this high station, will consider "his work honorable and glorious," and will cheerfully perform all parts of his duty. He will preach the gospel, in simplicity, to the poor, catechize young and old, meet their classes, baptize their children, visit and pray with their sick, bury their dead, bear with, and enlighten their ignorance, and be to them a spiritual father, a faithful friend, and safe guide. His whole heart must be in the work, and the whole work must be in his heart. Every prudent measure that promises success to his work, he must try; for, we have, yet, very much to learn; and, to be a successful missionary to the African, must be his highest ambition, his constant aim, and the object of his continual prayers. The practical duties of religion must be faithfully urged upon the hearts of his hearers; and, especially, the peculiar duties of their relation, according to the teachings of the Apostle. He must be more solicitous to imbue their minds with gospel principles and religious truth, and to correct their lives by gospel rules, than to arouse their excitable passions: nay, it may even be his duty to restrain excessive outbursts of feeling, in connection with religious exercises; for, nothing more readily brings their religion into contempt, than strong, passionate manifestations of religious feeling, unaccompanied by sobriety of spirit and consistency of conduct. Their sincerity is judged of, not by their manifestations of feeling, but by the uprightness and consistency of their conduct. True, the feelings of

Africans, as well as of other people, are very properly interested in the great business of religion ; but, the peculiarly excitable temperament of that people, renders it important, that excesses of this kind be carefully guarded against by the missionary ; and, especially, such as are disorderly, and tend to the injury of congregational devotion.

CHAPTER XIV.

FIGHTING.

Admitted to be wrong in ordinary cases—Supposed exceptions considered—Revenge excluded by the law of Christ—*Duelling*—The worst kind of wilful murder—Christians criminal, who countenance murderers of this class more than assassins—Duelling no proof of a higher than brute courage, and is not evidence of even the presence of this—*War*—Spirit of war contrary to that of the Gospel—Attended with fewer circumstances of cruelty than formerly—Duty of Christians to obey the calls of their country; but, not to rush, uncalled, to the field of battle.

FIGHTING. A personal rencontre of one Christian with another, or with any other person, for the purpose of inflicting bodily injury, or pain, is utterly at war with the peaceful spirit of the Gospel; and no Christian can, in good conscience, wilfully enter into such a conflict. And, indeed, the correctness of the rule, as applicable to ordinary cases, is very generally conceded; but, the difficulty is, in disposing of cases claimed to be exceptions to the general rule.

Thus, if a man use irritating language, or apply harsh and abusive epithets to you, such as calling you liar, thief, or the like, you claim the right to inflict on him personal chastisement for the offence. But, such revenge is not taught in the precepts or

example of Christ. He says, “*Bless* them which *curse* you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.” And, in his example, “when he was *reviled*, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.” Such conduct, therefore, has no sanction in the precepts or example of our great teacher, but seeks its justification in the revengeful feelings of the human heart. It is true, that nature prompts the human passions to this course; but, if religion has no power to subdue, or restrain, the corruptions of our nature, its pretensions are empty, and its power impotent. Socrates declared, that, by his philosophy, he had overcome the strong propensities of his nature; and is the religion of the Saviour less effectual to the same end, than Pagan philosophy?

But, aside from the direct instructions of Christ on this subject, the measure is not recommended by any advantage, or benefit, it secures to the party concerned. Suppose a man call you a ruffian and a bully, and you strike him for it, the act rather proves the truth, than the falsehood, of his accusation. If he call you a liar, does your knocking him down prove that you are a man of truth? No: but simply that you are a man of passion—which is oftener the enemy than the friend of truth. But, suppose he employ offensive epithets, for which you strike him, but he being the stronger, or more adroit pugilist, gives you a severe beating; and, besides, as the aggressive party, you are arraigned, and punished, as a violator of the laws of your country; what a gain you have made of it! beaten and bruised in

person, amersed in a pecuniary fine, disgraced as a public offender, and have also brought guilt on your conscience, and odium on the Church of Christ.

But, suppose the other party be the aggressor, as it regards the act of personal violence, and should first strike you; this presents a different state of the case, and affords you *legal* justification of returning the blow; but, whether a *moral* justification, is another question, and the one which you, as a Christian, are bound to consider. You, as a seeker of your soul's salvation, are supposed to be governed by the law and spirit of Christ; he, as a man of the world, is not. If, therefore, you have used irritating language, and manifested a violent temper, you have lost, thereby, all right of retaliation—even if you had such right before—and are not entitled to any merit, in not returning violence for violence; “for, if ye be buffeted for your faults, what thank have ye?” And, further, if ye have given no cause of offence, yet, before you dare return a blow, you must be satisfied that it is required for your personal safety or protection. In a word, if the impulses, on your part, be passion, and the object revenge, or retaliation, you have no more right to return evil for evil, in that form, than in any other. And, if your personal safety clearly require resistance, still that resistance must be kept within the limit of that object. To punish the insolence, or rashness, of the aggressor, is neither your duty nor your right. As a civil citizen, this is the business of the law; and, as a Christian, your cause belongs to God; for, “Vengeance is mine. I will repay,

saith the Lord: therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him," &c. And, indeed, the common law of the land only authorizes the employment of so much force, or resistance, as is necessary to protect against damage or injury. Yet, this principle is often departed from, by professed Christians, and even ministers of Christ have sometimes given countenance to such a course.

A young Christian was assailed with abusive language, and, finally, with personal violence. He turned upon his adversary, and beat him with severity. At the first opportunity, he informed his pastor what he had done, and particularly accused himself for becoming very angry, and for beating the man from anger, much more than was necessary for his personal protection, and suggested that the matter should be investigated before the Church. The pastor replied, that, as the matter stood, it might be necessary to have an investigation; "but," said he, "if you had given the rascal twice as much, I think the matter would then have been right, without any investigation." The young Christian, notwithstanding the minister's effort to lower the standard of gospel morality, declared, that no man could make him believe that he had done right in indulging violent anger, and in inflicting blows on a man, from a feeling of revenge; for, that his conscience, taught by God's Word, admonished him that he had sinned.

DUELLING. That barbarous mode of fighting, called *duelling*, it might be supposed, will meet with universal condemnation, on the part of Christians;

and, yet, some who make that profession, have shown themselves ready, if not to engage in mortal combat themselves, at least to countenance it, indirectly, by a degree of connivance; or, at best, by not bearing a public, firm, and consistent testimony against it. With so large a proportion of professing Christians in our country, it is impossible that public opinion could be so generally wrong, on this subject, as it is, if they all did their duty, faithfully, in the matter.

A man, not of the worst heart, by an unhappy concurrence of circumstances, may, in an unguarded moment, take the life of a fellow man. He is condemned to the penitentiary, to atone to society for his sin; and is loathed, and shunned, by saint and sinner, as a murderer, whose touch is contamination, and whose society, even after he has met the demands of the law, would disgrace those claiming to be respectable. But, the duellist is the worst of wilful murderers. He resolves to commit murder; and, then, for days, or weeks, studies, and practices, and contrives, how he may most surely effect his barbarous purpose. He accomplishes his bloody design; he has killed a man, who, perhaps, never injured him, and has sent him, unprepared, to the judgment of God; has transformed a fond wife into a heart-broken widow, and happy children into desolate, and, it may be, destitute orphans; and, now, with murdered blood on his hands, and a murderer's crime on his soul, the hardened demon throws himself back into the bosom of civilized and Christian society, and his whole bearing plainly

indicates a feeling of infernal pride, on account of his *honorable* achievement; and these scandalous pretensions are strongly sustained, by the marked attention bestowed on him by respectable society, and even by professed Christians, and Christian *ladies*. In the Book of Heaven, he is written down a murderer of the deepest dye; yet, who shuns or greets him as such? Do Christian fathers and mothers close their doors against him, and tell him, plainly, that a murderer cannot associate in their families? By no means: but, rather, he is courted, and caressed, for what should insure him—if not a halter, which he deserves more than most who gain that distinction—at least, utter exclusion from respectable society. Children should be taught to take the opposite side of the street, when they see him coming; young ladies should pass him with a shudder of horror; and he should be made to feel, that the curse and the mark of Cain were burnt into his forehead, by the judgment of God, and the unanimous suffrages of good society, until he repents, as a murderer, and seeks forgiveness of God and community.

But, while Christian people continue to countenance the fashionable assassin, the evil cannot be restrained; and, that it is not so restrained, is, doubtless, in a great degree, the fault of *Christians*. But, custom, it is said, has long sanctioned duelling, and placed it on less criminal, and more honorable ground, than common murder; yet, the same is true, or has been so, of suicide, patricide, burning widows and children, and every other abomination that God hates, and for

which he will punish the children of disobedience. Why, then, should this remnant of barbarism be honored, and cherished, more than any other destructive and damning crime? One only reason has been assigned: "It promotes courage, and is the fruit and evidence of that commanding virtue." This is, at best, only true of animal courage; the virtue in which beasts of prey excel. It is, then, but a *noble* aspiring of man, to take high rank with the wild boar of the forest, the lion of the desert, or the fearless mastiff. Moral courage it is not; for, it is for lack of that virtue, that men fight duels at all. A man offers you what you regard as an insult; and, for fear the world should think you destitute of brute courage, you challenge him to mortal combat. Or, a man challenges you: you have, it may be, wronged him, and could easily make a satisfactory explanation; but, if you do so, you fear it will be thought you did it because you had not the courage to fight. Now, in the one case as in the other, you were led into the crime of actual or intentional murder, because you had not the moral courage to be called *coward*, by those who set a higher estimate on the virtues of the mastiff, than on those of the *philosopher* or *Christian*, who value a quality that pertains to the blood and nerves, above that which has its origin in reason, philosophy, and religion. But, even this rather degrading plea for duelling, is, in many cases, if not in most, utterly fallacious.

In a large proportion of cases, men who fight are cowards, and only fight because they have not the moral courage to be called by their true designation.

In proof of this, it needs only to be remarked, that men of true courage seldom have any fear of having their courage doubted; but, men who doubt their own physical courage, are very apt to resort to expedients, to convince others that they are not cowardly; and, in connection with this, take the fact, that duellists who can hit a dollar nine shots in ten, will, in actual combat, at the same distance, miss a *man* nine shots in ten. You can take any number of women and children, (who can be induced to fire a pistol at all) and they shall make better shots, at a target, than the same number of practiced duellists will, in shooting at each other. Duelling courage, is, at best, but a brute virtue; and, the existence, even of that, is very questionable, in a large proportion of cases. Christians should sternly and steadfastly discountenance duelling and duellists; and, especially, Christian females should do this, and the barbarous vice would be compelled to yield.

WAR. Another branch of this subject is *War*. War, is, to nations, what fighting is to individuals; and the spirit in which both originate, is the same, in general, and is in opposition to the peaceful spirit of the gospel. One of the glorious results of the universal triumph of Christianity, will be, the establishment of universal peace among the nations of the earth. The spirit of the gospel has wrought a material change on this subject already; for, formerly, war was made by one nation against another, for the purpose of conquest, and this object was regarded as sufficient justification for aggressive hostilities. Kingdoms were conquered, and ceded to the dominion

of the conqueror; or, if permitted to continue a sort of distinct nation, it was usually under tribute and disabilities. Prisoners taken in war, were murdered in cold blood, or reduced to slavery. Now, the case is quite different among civilized nations; and, especially, those claiming to be Christian. War, *avowedly* for conquest, is not made; and nations making war, manifest a deep desire to convince the world of the justice of their causes, respectively, and of the uncontrollable necessity of going into war. The victorious nation does not seek to destroy the national existence of the vanquished, nor to lay them under permanent tribute; prisoners of war are treated with humanity, private property is respected, and parties neutral, or non-combatant, are not molested.

Yet, with all these ameliorations of the cruelties of war, it is still one of the most shocking of forms in which human depravity is developed, carrying, in its bloody train, all the kinds of suffering and sorrow to which human beings can be subjected, and all the manifestations of crime that human depravity can present. If the rulers of each nation would neither make war, except of absolute necessity—forced upon them—nor give cause to others to make war on them, wars, as well defensive as offensive, would at once cease. But, the duty of individual Christians, with regard to war, demands a passing notice. It is the duty of the citizen, and, especially, the Christian, to obey the laws of his country; if, therefore, he is called on, authoritatively, by his country, to go out to battle, it would seem to be

his Christian duty to obey the mandate. But, that, on the first sound of the tocsin of war, it is the duty of the Christian to work himself into a fever of patriotism, and love of military glory, and rush to the scene of carnage, not by *command*, but by mere *permission*, of his country, is, by no means, so clear a case of duty. In short, if he go, either with objects of personal distinction or aggrandizement, or from a love of the excitement and operations of war, he is clearly out of the line of duty, and his religious safety is in most questionable condition.

There is, however, a duty, in relation to this subject, which every Christian owes to his country, his religion, and his God ; it is, to pray, fervently, to Almighty God, to direct the hearts of rulers to counsels of peace, and to overrule the evils of war, to the promotion of the cause of godliness in the earth. If we fail of this, we neglect an important part of our Christian duty.

CHAPTER XV.

QUARRELLING, BRAWLING, BROTHER GOING TO LAW WITH BROTHER.

Quarrelling, Brawling—Angry manner, and harsh words, wrong, and ill-judged—Quaker's rule for avoiding it—Gentleness, and less confident manner, more effectual—Franklin—*Brother going to law, &c.*—Good men may honestly differ, and come in conflict—In that case, the judgment of brethren is safe, and more becoming, than the public courts—Scandal of Christians going to law for right—Our rule makes provision for the whole ground of settlement, collection, &c.—Delinquents punishable.

“**QUARRELLING, BRAWLING.**” Contentious, angry, noisy, boisterous conversation. This is contrary to the meekness and gentleness of Christ. If any one have wronged, or injured you, and you deem it your duty to speak to him of the matter, the proper manner is, to utter, calmly, briefly, and firmly, what is necessary to be said, and no more. Angry words, or crimination, have the effect to irritate both yourself and him you speak to, and both will be injured, and neither receive benefit; whereas, had you spoken gently, but plainly, the other party would probably have heard with candor, been open to conviction, and, perhaps, his error might have been cured. By the other course, he is made still more your enemy, and the case becomes incurable on both sides. And, especially, in what you say,

avoid a loud, brawling manner ; it has a peculiarly ill effect on both parties. That good Friend (Quaker) who said, that the secret of governing the temper consisted in never raising the voice above a tone of gentleness, was a better philosopher than many who have made more imposing pretensions. One would find it an awkward business, to carry on a quarrel, or brawl, in the low, soft tone, in which affection and kindness are wont to clothe themselves. And, where the contention is about differences of opinion, either as regards facts or principles, doctrines, politics, or any thing else, the same remarks will generally apply.

A confident, dogmatizing manner, accompanied with an air of dictation and an intolerant spirit, must operate, prejudicially, to your own enjoyment, and will cover the other party with a coat of mail, so thick, that your best arguments can never penetrate it. Less self-confidence, a conciliatory manner, and more deference for the opinions of your opponent, would prepare him to receive conviction of the truth from your arguments. You believe yourself in the right—so does your friend ; say to him, “*I know you are wrong;*” and, you will, probably, get, for answer, “*And I know that you are wrong, sir.*” But, say to him, “*I really think it is as I have stated ; but, I may be in error, as I have found myself, on many other occasions ; and, if so, I shall be pleased to be set right;*” and, you will, probably, elicit a reply like this, “*I have been of the opinion stated ;*” or, “*My recollection of the fact, is as I have said ; but, I claim no exemption from error,*

and am more than ready to be corrected, if in the wrong." Oh! how "a soft answer turneth away wrath!"

It was Franklin, we believe, who said, in substance, that the expression, "I am inclined to think it is thus or so," has opened the human heart to more convictions, than all the argument expressed, in a dogmatizing manner, that ever was uttered by man. And, there can be little doubt of the soundness of the position. The Christian, especially, should not strive, but be gentle in all things. Gentleness is his armor, offensive and defensive; his shield and his sword, with which he defends himself, and overcomes his adversary.

"BROTHER GOING TO LAW WITH BROTHER." The law was made for the lawless and disobedient, and a man who is earnestly desirous to "flee the wrath to come and be saved from sin," will not require the action of law to compel him to do justice. He acts from fixed moral principle, and will do nothing to injure his neighbour or wound his own conscience, no matter how large the gain which such a course may promise. Yet, it will happen, that men of pure intentions, aiming only at right, will differ with regard to their respective rights and duties connected with property and business transactions; and, in like manner, it may happen, that a good man may fail, through unavoidable reverses, to meet his engagements with another good man; but neither of these cases requires, or even justifies a resort to the civil law for redress. The apostle sharply reproved one of the Churches for appealing to the law for the settlement

of difficulties between brethren. Members of the Church are presumed to be governed by right motives, and a desire to do justice in all things; and, where such a disposition exists, the judgment of honest, impartial, and intelligent brethren, affords quite as good security of rights, and against wrongs, as any court could afford.

Furthermore, when difficulties do grow up unhappily between brethren, it is, on all accounts, better that they be kept within the Church family, and not proclaimed to a gainsaying world, through the litigations of a court. And, besides, when brethren come to be arrayed against each other in legal strife, before the public, the spirit of rivalry, of strife for victory, and of bitterness, is very likely to take possession of them; and, through them, the cause of God is wounded by its professed friends. Again, in legal action, the right is not unfrequently perverted, or lost, by mere legal technicalities; but, in a court of moral equity, composed of God-fearing brethren, no such advantage is taken, and the untrammelled justice of the case is honestly sought, and is more likely to be gained in this way, than in any other.

Brother going to law with brother, is a violation of a positive apostolic injunction; when, therefore, the rule is violated by members of the Church, it is the duty of those in the administration to have the case fairly investigated. For this purpose, we have a law based on this general rule, and that law should always be applied in cases of violation, unless the case be one of very peculiar character. If, for example, a man be in the relation of executor, administrator,

or guardian, and must take legal proceedings against a brother, or become liable himself, such a case would not fall within the rule. A law to punish a member of the Church, for going to law with another member, would not be just and equitable however, were not provision made by which the creditor can get his just claims through the intervention of the Church tribunals. But such provision is made; and, consequently, members are left without excuse in bringing suit against other members of the Church. If the claim be a disputed one, the parties are to choose an arbiter each, and the two arbiters a third, to adjust the accounts. If either be dissatisfied with the settlement, he may apply to the Quarterly Conference, which will grant him, if there be apparent ground for it, a new commission of five, appointed as above, to re-examine the accounts. If the account be an undisputed one, then, on complaint of the creditor, the case shall be submitted to a committee, to determine whether any further indulgence shall be granted to the debtor; and, if so, what, and on what conditions. In either of the cases above, if either party refuse to comply, or submit to the decision, he should be brought before "the society, or a select number," and they should determine the fact of his compliance or refusal, and what penalty, if any, should be inflicted on him.

CHAPTER XVI.

RETURNING EVIL FOR EVIL, OR RAILING FOR RAILING. USING MANY WORDS IN BUYING AND SELLING. THE BUYING OR SELLING GOODS THAT HAVE NOT PAID THE DUTY.

Returning evil, &c.—The spirit of revenge contrary to the Gospel—Gentleness, kindness, and forgiveness, the Christian's offensive and defensive armor. *Using many words, &c.*—The seller's trade to praise his wares—Danger of injuring both conscience and business—The falling and Jewing system. *Buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty*—The matter explained—Equally criminal to stop money on its way to the treasury, as to take it from there.

“RETURNING EVIL FOR EVIL, OR RAILING FOR RAILING.”—The disposition of the natural heart, and the morality of the world, dispose men to do unto others as they do to you,—not as they should do, or as you would have them do to you. The man has wronged you, spoken unkindly of you, or shown himself your enemy; and, for this reason, you will act towards him in the same manner. Such a course is at variance with the gospel rule; and with the rights, duties, and interests of both the parties. Christ, your pattern, when he was reviled, reviled not; when he suffered, he threatened not; and even implored mercy on his own murderers. He taught his followers:—“Bless them that curse you; bless and curse not.” “Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.” “Forgive us our

trespasses, *as we forgive those who trespass against us.*"

The spirit of forbearance and forgiveness is peculiar to the gospel system, and is one of its distinguishing excellencies. Its practical observance is calculated to work results in harmonizing the elements of society, that nothing else can possibly accomplish. When you hear that your neighbour has said some hard things of you, first enquire within yourself, honestly, if you have given any real or apparent ground for it; and if you find the first true, go to him and acknowledge your fault; if the second, go and explain away his misapprehension; and, ten to one, in either case, that will be the end of the difficulty, and you will have gained your brother. But, if neither be true, and you possess conscious innocence, and feel yourself traduced in the matter, do not fall in to a paroxysm of rage, and return railing for railing. Say no harsh or irritating things of him; but, on the contrary, remark quietly, that, though it is a small thing to be judged with men's judgment, in such cases, yet you regret that he has fallen into a mistake about you, of which you will endeavor to convince him by the blamelessness of your conduct; and, if he possess good traits of character—and who does not?—take occasion to allude to those better qualities of his as a reason why you regret his false estimate of you. When this reaches his ears, the stronger probability is, that he will at once regret, and, perhaps, retract what he had said; and, instead of remaining at perpetual variance, ere long, friendly feelings will prevail, and friendly relations be established between you.

All men are strengthened in their enmity and armed for strife, by harsh language, or ill-natured expressions; but no man provides armor to defend himself against the *shafts of kindness*; and, consequently, there is, probably, not one enemy of a thousand who may not be conquered by these effective love-pointed weapons. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," is a precept full of harmony and heaven. Feed your hungry enemy, and minister kindly to all his wants; and, "in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head,"—shalt soften his hardness, and melt down his enmity, by the fervid fire of love.

"USING MANY WORDS IN BUYING OR SELLING."—Perhaps few good precepts are so generally violated, by business doing Christians, as this one. The seller seems to regard it as a part of his trade or calling, and essential to his success, to commend his commodities to the buyer by all the eloquence and art he can bring to bear on the subject; and it is pressed on the customer with so much urgency, that the latter finds it almost impossible to escape. The superior quality, and uncommon cheapness of the article, are set forth in such terms as are nearly irresistible. This is wrong in any one, and, especially, when the limits of sober truth are transcended, as they almost necessarily are, where so much is said on a subject so barren of truthful matter. But, in a Christian, it is a letting down of the dignity of his profession to resort to such petty artifices. And, besides, the effect of such a habit is to diminish, or, perhaps, entirely destroy confidence in the declaration of a fluent dealer. A simple statement of facts, and a candid answering

of the questions propounded by the buyer, will secure a higher measure of confidence than all the over-wrought eulogies that can be pronounced on his wares. A dealer has done much to his own advantage, when he has convinced his customers that they may rely with perfect confidence on his statements.

Another wrong in trade, but too common, is to state your price, and then fall from it lower and lower, so convincing the buyer that you have no fixed rule of action, and are seeking to extort a larger price than the value of the article. He reasonably infers, that your lowest price is one that you can afford to take, or you would not take it; and that price being one-third, or one-half less than your first demand, he comes fairly to the conclusion, that the difference between the two prices, is the sum above a fair, honest price, or profit, that you intended to have shorn him of, if you could. A Christian should fix his prices at a just and fair rate, and never vary from these, unless there be a good reason for so doing; and that reason for your own reputation's sake, ought to be made obvious to the buyer.

And the principles applicable to the seller, should govern the action of the buyer. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer, (and the seller also) and, when he is gone, he boasteth," is a proverb of wisdom and truth. "Beating down," or cheapening the article you would purchase, by undervaluing it, or by other arts, is unbecoming a Christian. As a general rule, pay the price asked, or go quietly away and say nothing about it; but, if you wish to procure it, and think it too high, and that, probably, the owner can

afford to take a less price, you might say to him that, if he can afford to take a certain price, named, you will purchase, but that you cannot afford to pay more. This would settle the point at issue, without many words. But, to see Christians laboring, by the hour, to "jew" each other, to get an advantage of a few coppers or dimes, is a humiliating spectacle. If you would preserve your own conscience pure, if you would enjoy the confidence of the Church, and the respect of the world, use not many words in buying and selling.

"THE BUYING OR SELLING GOODS THAT HAVE NOT PAID THE DUTY."—This is an obligation arising out of our relation to the government under which we live, and by which we enjoy protection of person, property, and character. Duties are imposed by the national legislature, on certain commodities imported from other countries into ours; and the revenue, arising from this source, constitutes the chief means of supporting the expenses of government. Either, therefore, to smuggle goods into the country, in violation of the tariff laws of the land, or to buy or sell such, knowing them to be contraband, is a lawless robbery committed on the treasury of the nation; for, lightly as some persons seem to think of the matter, to arrest money on its way to the national treasury, and appropriate it to private use, is an act of the same moral complexion with that of taking it out of the treasury, feloniously, after it has reached its destination. And to purloin, in any form, from the government, is a crime of no less turpitude than robbing an individual.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GIVING OR TAKING THINGS ON USURY;
THAT IS, UNLAWFUL INTEREST. UNCHARITABLE,
OR UNPROFITABLE CONVERSATION;
PARTICULARLY, SPEAKING EVIL OF MAGIS-
TRATES OR MINISTERS.

Usury—Value of money variable; and, hence, difficult to fix a just rate of hire—Necessary to follow the rule of law—Duty to lend—*Uncharitable, or unprofitable conversation*—Nature and effects of charity—Bad effects of neglecting this rule—Unprofitable conversation nearly allied to uncharitable—common and fashionable—unbecoming Christians—*Speaking evil of magistrates or ministers*—Original design of this rule to apply to civil rulers—a different opinion held, but this one proved by several arguments; but, though the *rule* does not apply to gospel ministers, yet, it well enough expresses a duty due them—Disposition to fault-finding rebuked—Christians fix the position of their ministers in community, by the respect *they* show him by word and deed.

“THE GIVING OR TAKING THINGS ON USURY; THAT IS, UNLAWFUL INTEREST.”—This is a point of no little difficulty to settle, with entire equity. The circulating medium of a country—that is, its money; whether in the form of precious metals, or their representative—is fluctuating in value; and it must be impossible, therefore, to fix a just standard of value for it, suited to all the different circumstances and times. A barrel of flour, or pork, is of the same intrinsic value—that is, it will go as far in sustaining human life—when its cost, or commercial value, is five dollars,

as when it is twenty-five. Money, then, is more or less valuable, as it will procure more or less of the necessaries and comforts of life. With this unsteadiness in the real value of money, there must be some difficulty in fixing an unchangeable value on the use, or hire, of it; yet, to guard against extortion, governments fix upon a certain rate of hire, or interest, for the use of money; and, whether this be always exactly the true value, or not, is not a question for the Christian to debate; his government has established that particular rate of interest, and attached a penalty to the offence of exacting more; and, the good citizen, and, especially, the Christian, is bound to obey, and submit to the requirements of law. But, another consideration in favor of respecting the law, in this matter, is, that it is intended to protect the poor against oppressive exactions, on the part of the rich. At best, "The borrower is slave to the lender." (Proverbs.) "Do not rich men oppress you?" It is, therefore, at once, merciful and just, in the government, to interpose its authority, in protecting the poor against the oppressions of the rich; and, that true Christians should take side with the government—not against the rich, but—in protection of the rights of the poor. And the wealthy Christian should deem it a small sacrifice, to be restricted, by civil and Church law, from claiming as large gain of his hired money as he may consider it really worth, when he recollects that it is the command of his government, and intended for the benefit of the larger number, and the more needy of society.

But Christians should be slow to put out their money at usurious interest; because, the act is expressly forbidden in the Word of God, and indulgence in it, wears the appearance of a grasping—not to say avaricious—disposition, more consistent with the love of the world, than with the love of God and man. And, while there are men of the world, and even infidels, in our country, who make it matter of conscience, not to receive usurious interest for the use of money, if a rich Christian exacts it from a poor brother, it puts arguments in the mouths of gainsayers, and is used, frequently, to the discredit of our religion. There may be exceptions to the general rule; but, unless the cases be clearly marked as exceptions, by peculiar circumstances, Christians should subject their conduct to the government of this law.

The remarks above are directed to the lender, rather than the borrower; because, though the rule speaks alike against giving or taking things on usury, it is a natural presumption, that men will not seek to pay usurious hire for money, but would rather avoid it. Yet, there are cases, in which men, from motives of lucre, are anxious to give even exorbitant interest for money, to carry out some scheme of speculation. To such, the rule applies with equal force, as to usurious lenders. But, where men are placed in straits, by providential and unavoidable circumstances, in which they must have money, or forfeit their word, suffer for the necessaries of life, or the like, and can only procure it by paying more than lawful interest, they are protected by the law

of necessity, and the whole responsibility rests on the usurious lender. And, if a man is restrained from taking usury, through fear of the law, or public censure, and, therefore, will not lend at all, when he has it to spare, he is still a usurer at heart, and adds to this the withholdment from the needy, though secure of its return, that which the circumstances of the latter require, and which the former could well spare. It is as much a duty to *lend*, as it is not to exact exorbitant hire for the thing loaned.

“UNCHARITABLE, OR UNPROFITABLE CONVERSATION.”
Charity is the crowning virtue of our religion; and, the impressive and clear description of it, by the Apostle, St. Paul, in 1st Corinthians xiii., should be very frequently read, and carefully studied, by all persons desirous to seek their salvation.

One of its many good qualities, as there delineated, is, that it “thinketh no evil.” “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh;” and, if the heart be filled with charity, out of it can proceed no uncharitable expressions. The value of this precept will appear, when we consider, how large a portion of the bitterness, strifes, heart-burnings, and discords, in society, have their origin in uncharitable remarks, imprudently uttered. How often does a single uncharitable remark, made about an innocent individual, run, and spread, in society, like fire cast into a dry prairie, until the subject of remark is nearly ruined in reputation, and knows not wherefore, or by whom. And, in many cases, he is the last man, in a whole

community, to find out that any thing is abroad to his detriment.

Brother Smith attended a wedding, in the family of a neighbor—ate his supper, and, at an early hour, returned home. After his departure, music, dancing, and cards, were introduced, and several persons indulged, to excess, in the pleasures of the wine-cup; but, of all this, he happened to hear nothing, for some time. A month afterwards, the shy manner, and cold looks, of brethren, admonished him that something was wrong; and, with some effort and inquiry, he finally learned, that it was currently rumored, that he had attended a dance and card party, where drinking and disorderly conduct prevailed; and the truth of the report was not doubted; because, it was known, publicly, that those things were carried on, on that occasion; and, he had, himself, informed Brother Jones that he was going there, and Mrs. Tellall had seen him there, she was confident, after dancing, playing, and drinking, had commenced. The rumor had gained something, by each “uncharitable conversation” had on the subject; until, by the time it reached his ear, it had grown to fearful magnitude. Had the rule of charity been pursued, much evil had been avoided. “Charity thinketh no evil” of a brother; until, having first, and immediately, gone to him, heard his explanation, and learned all the facts.

Be careful how you *hear* evil of a brother, *more* careful how you *believe* it, and *most* careful how you *report* it. This rule observed, would put an end to tattling, slander, tale-bearing, and evil

speaking, and would extinguish the embers of strife among neighbors and brethren.

How true it is, that “the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison;” “it setteth on fire the whole course of nature, and is set on fire of hell;” and equally true, that he who rightly “bridleth his tongue, is able, also, to govern the whole body.”

On no point, probably, are Christians more generally deficient, than on this; and, while it seems a small matter, it is really one of the most dangerous of the “little foxes that spoil the vines.” Speak nothing of your brother, if possible to avoid it, unless you can speak something to his advantage; and, if you “hear, fear, or think,” any thing, unfavorable of him, go, at once, and speak to him, freely and kindly; but, send it not abroad, without giving him information, or you will be likely to lose the confidence of your brother, and to wound your own conscience and the cause of God.

And, what “uncharitable conversation” is, in mischievousness of effects, to those who are made its objects, or victims, “*unprofitable conversation*” is to those who engage in it. In truth, the *unprofitable* is very apt to degenerate, by the force of its own inherent tendencies, into the *uncharitable*. The inestimable gift of speech was bestowed on man, for the impartation of profitable thoughts and feelings; and, since, in the works of God, and in his revealed Book, there are such vast and inexhaustible mines of knowledge and enjoyment, it is to be regretted, that beings constituted with capabilities to communicate and receive so much information and moral

improvement, through the medium of conversation, should employ their noble powers in conversation the most ridiculously trifling, empty, and unprofitable. In the fashionable assemblies and circles of the day, it is absolutely astonishing, to what perfection educated and sensible men and women have brought the art of talking, continuously, for hours, without expressing an idea, or giving utterance to a thought, of sufficient value to be remembered an hour. And, if, into those refined companies, man or woman dare introduce the subject of science, religion, or literature, (excepting only silly novels) he is voted a bore, or she is set down as a blue stocking. But, whatever pretext fashionable worldlings may choose to plead, in defence of such puerilities, Christians—who know, that, for every idle word that men utter, shall they give account to God—can have no semblance of plea for such a course. The pious, in ancient times, “spake often, one to another;” but, theirs was not unprofitable conversation; on the contrary, so highly was it esteemed by God himself, that he “hearkened, and heard it,” and recorded it in his book of remembrance; for, “a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them.” What sort of figure would some of the conversations of professed Christians exhibit, in the Book of God? Oh! the “foolish talking,” the “idle words,” the “jesting, unbecoming sayings,” that shall appear against us at the day of the Lord! Seeing these things are so, “what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation?” “Having our conversation seasoned with (gracious) salt, fit to minister grace to the hearers.”

“SPEAKING EVIL OF MAGISTRATES OR MINISTERS.”

With regard to the “speaking evil against magistrates and ministers,” it was designed, no doubt, to guard the original Methodists of England, (for, the rules were then not expected ever to operate beyond that locality) against any thing like insubordination, or disrespect, to the government and the civil rulers of the land; and a practical carrying out of the precept, which Paul quoted against himself, when he had ignorantly transgressed it, “Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.” And it is a part of Christian duty, to be in peaceable subjection to the government of the country. It is the right of a Christian, as a freeman, to give his vote for a change of rulers, or of laws, if he approve not those in authority; but, it is his duty, as a Christian, to submit to the constituted authority, without inveighing or noisy complaint. So much as this is necessary, for the purposes of orderly government in the State; and Christians are the last men in society, who should be chargeable with being despisers of governments, or brawling disorganizers. Christians, of all names, have erred, to the discredit of their profession, by the zealous part many have taken, in the tempestuous contentions of political parties in our own country.

This passage, we are aware, has been understood by some, to have had original reference to ministers of the gospel; which is, doubtless, a misapprehension of the design of Mr. Wesley. For, 1st. It could not have meant Methodist *ministers*, for there were none, at that date, (save Mr. Wesley, and a few others who

were clergymen of the English Church) they being simply unordained lay preachers, to whom the term *minister* was never applied, and to whom it was inapplicable. 2nd. It did not intend ministers of the English Church, because the term *clergymen*, and not *minister*, was applied to them, by Mr. Wesley, as well as by every one else; and, because, further, the low state of morals among the clergy generally, and their abuse of the sacred office, furnished a poor reason why Mr. Wesley should regard it as more criminal to speak evil of them (of whom little else could be truthfully spoken) than of any body else. 3rd. The term minister was applied, in England, almost exclusively, and, certainly, distinctively, to ministers of State, answering to the heads of departments in our own government. They are regarded as an embodiment of the government, and are always styled *ministers*. To these, and the civil magistracy of the country, the rule evidently intended to apply. 4th. The British Methodist Conference gave this interpretation to the rule, in 1792—the year after Mr. Wesley's death. They say: “None of us shall, either in writing, or conversation, speak lightly, or irreverently, of the the government under which he lives. The oracles of God command us to be subject to the higher powers; and honour to the king is there connected with the fear of God.” And, with explicit reference to this very rule, they add: “Such are the general rules of the connection, on speaking evil of dignities; and, if it be discovered that any members observe them not, or habitually break any of them, they are admonished of the error of their ways. They are borne with for a

season; but then, if they repent not, they have no more place in the society."

Mr. Wesley, in an article respecting "speaking evil of dignities," after treating freely of the crime of speaking evil of the chief magistrate, adds: "Many, who do not so freely censure the king, speak all manner of evil of his *ministers*," &c. "Hence," said the organ of the British connection, many years ago, "Mr. Wesley made it a rule of the Methodist Society, that all who continue therein, shall avoid evil of every kind, particularly speaking evil of *magistrates* and *ministers*."

Perhaps our first Bishops—Coke and Asbury—will be considered as good authority, at least, as modern interpreters, who have construed this rule, in a manner productive of great damage to the Church. The Bishops, then, in their notes on this passage, simply give, for exposition, the following quotations from the word of God, every one of them referring, expressly and exclusively to civil governments and rulers, and the duty of Christians with regard to them: Acts xxiii. 25, Rom. xiii. 1-7; Tit. iii. 1; 2 Pet. ii. 9-11; Jude viii. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. With these lights before us, it is impossible to doubt what was the original design of the rule, or to sanction its practical perversion, in later times.

But, though the rule was not primarily designed to protect gospel ministers, yet the admonition is as necessary in their case, probably, as in any other. There is too much of a disposition, in the Church, to hear preaching as critics, rather than to be made wise unto salvation by its teachings. The manner, the

style, the length, and all other qualities and appurtenances of the sermon, are canvassed and discussed over a rich, hot, Sabbath dinner, with the most scrutinizing criticism; and, in this way, many times, the preachers way is hedged up, and unfavorable impressions made against him, which it may be difficult, if not impossible, for him to remove. Were hearing mixed with faith and prayer, and followed by serious meditation; did the hearers implore God's help for the preacher, and for themselves, the hands of many a minister would be held up, instead of being discouraged by the impossibility of satisfying critical and fastidious members.

It is a serious matter to say any thing against a true minister of Christ, that may prevent his access to the hearts of the people, or his usefulness in the vineyard of his Master; and a single thoughtless sentence, containing an unfavorable inuendo, may work this fearful mischief, though the man uttering it may have been actuated more by a desire to be looked on as possessing superior discernment, than by any wish to injure the standing or influence of the minister. To avoid all this, it is only necessary to act in these, and all things, with a view to promote the glory of God. Then will you be willing to bear with the imperfections of your minister, and, rather support and defend, than discourage and prostrate him. In weakening the hands, the influence, the courage of your ministers, you weaken the Church. As you speak of your ministry, so will the world, generally, estimate the character and value of that ministry; and they will set an estimate on the Church itself, very like that put on

the ministry. But, however low the estimate your remarks may cause others to place on the ministry and the Church, they will, generally, put a still lower one on the man who speaks evil of his own ministry, and his own Church ; and the judgment is usually just and correct.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DOING TO OTHERS AS WE WOULD NOT THAT THEY SHOULD DO UNTO US. DOING WHAT WE KNOW IS NOT FOR THE GLORY OF GOD: AS, THE PUTTING ON OF GOLD, AND COSTLY APPAREL. DRESS.

The golden rule—God requires our obedience to this rule, but *we* have no claim on others to observe it, only as based on our own obedience to it—DRESS—“*Gold and costly apparel*” are joined together in the rule, and in the word of God, though often separated in enforcing the duty—Both prohibited alike and for the same reason, though the putting on of *gold* condemned by many, who scruple not to put on costly apparel—Reasons against both—a wrongful waste of money—out of Christian character—the example is pernicious—afflicts the feelings of others—operates to the prejudice of Christianity—An excuse—Inconsistency in early *plain* Methodists—Bad effects of it—Moderation and gravity in dress required, especially in ministers and aged Christians.

“DOING TO OTHERS AS WE WOULD NOT THAT THEY SHOULD DO UNTO US.”—We are here brought directly up to the golden rule of Christ, a rule worth more, in itself, than all the other systems of morality or ethics ever given to the world. If you would *not* that others should wrong you in dealings, suppress part of the truth, conceal defects in articles sold you, be fair to your face, and say unkind things of you behind your back, or suffer others to do so, without defending you, then this must be your rule of action towards them,

otherwise, you have no claim on them. God has a claim on *them*, and on *you*, to do to others as *you would* they should do unto you, whether others *do* so to you or not; but, *you* have no such claim on others, unless you act on this rule with regard to them. How few Christians live in strict compliance with this rule? And how would its faithful observance make the wilderness to blossom as the rose, and the moral deserts of earth, to be as the garden of the Lord!

DRESS.—“DOING WHAT WE KNOW IS NOT FOR THE GLORY OF GOD: AS, THE PUTTING ON OF GOLD, AND COSTLY APPAREL.” The admonition, “Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,” clearly prohibits Christians from doing, “what they *know* is not for His glory.” The essential glory of God, cannot be in any manner affected by the conduct, or spirit of man; whether they serve God, or fight against his government, he will still be God, the God of glory; but, the glory of his grace may be displayed, and advanced, by a course of obedience to the Divine commands, and, especially, by doing good to the souls and bodies of men, and leading them to virtue and piety. This is called, the declarative glory of God; and this, it is given to men to promote; or to obscure. Certain acts may not be strictly vicious or criminal, and yet not be for the glory of God. And several examples here follow in the rules, two of which stand in the caption of this article, *putting on of gold*, and *putting on costly apparel*. These are joined together, not only in these rules, but also in the sacred word, from which they are copied. See 1 Tim. ii. 9; 1 Peter iii.

3, 4 ; and what God hath joined together, man has no right to put asunder. And yet, this is not unfrequently done in this very case ; men and ministers, who tolerate any extent of expensiveness in dress, or costliness of apparel, yet feel themselves called on to bear a zealous testimony against the wearing of *gold*, however small the cost of the article worn. Whatever is wrong in putting on gold, is wrong in putting on costly apparel ; and whatever renders the one improper, places the other in the same category. God has prohibited both these things, and both alike, and for the same reasons ; for, though what God prohibits is wrong, *because* he prohibits it, yet the reason of the prohibition commonly lies uncovered on the very surface of the subject, accessible to all candid inquirers. Why, then, is the “putting on of gold, and costly apparel, forbidden ?

1st. It is a mal-appropriation of your Lord’s money. You have no right to squander, in extravagant dress, what God has entrusted to your stewardship, for the relief of the widow and fatherless, or to aid in spreading the gospel of salvation.

2nd. It is out of Christian character, to manifest, or to cherish a fondness for finery, a pride of dress, a love of fashion. To see a Christian decorate his or her person, in a manner indicating more care for the ornamenting of the death-doomed, but idolized body, than for the immortal soul ; and squander, in frivolous show, what should go to the treasury of the Lord, or the poor, is a spectacle of pitiable weakness and folly. Any thing in the line of dress, that tends to foster pride in yourself, or children, is clearly wrong, and should be carefully avoided. A conscientious and

sensible Christian will never be first to be carried away with new fashions; nor to imitate the devotee of fashion in an idolatrous devotion to that capricious divinity. The extravagantly fashionable Christian loses the confidence of the Church, the world, and of himself; and, probably, none such enjoy a full share of the life of godliness in the soul.

3rd. The example is pernicious. Are you rich in the goods of this world? By the force of a principle of our common nature, we are disposed to imitate those above us, in every department, and in nothing is this more manifest, than in the matter of dress. If you, therefore, being a rich Christian, set an example of extravagance in dress, in furniture, in equipage, those in circumstances less opulent, will be inclined to imitate you in these things, to their own injury; while their example becomes, in turn, the object of imitation with persons in circumstances still below theirs, and thus extravagance, debt, and distress follow, as the baneful fruit of your example.* True, your example does not

* MISS COX, in her excellent work, "Young Lady's Companion," which has the warm sanction of Bishop McIlvaine, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, says: "The passion for personal decoration, is, alas! too widely diffused over our whole country, and is every where leading to the most fatal results. It is the great Moloch of American females; and the devotees of this idol are to be found in every stage of society. Among the poor, it frequently lures its victims to the paths of infamy, and leaves them to reap the bitter wages of their sin, through an old age of disease and squalid poverty, or carries them to an untimely grave. On this account, if on no other, it behooves American females, who occupy the higher ranks of society, and, especially, such as are professing Christians, to set an example of modera-

justify their conduct; but neither is your conduct excusable, when you know the evil effects it is calculated to produce in others. Do you say, "My money is my own, and I have a right to do with it as I please?" This is a great mistake: you are not your own; and the property you possess is not held in your own right, but only as a steward of your Lord's money, and to Him you must answer. You have, therefore, no right to waste your Lord's goods on your lust of show, or pride of heart; and, especially, when in doing so, you not only rob the poor, whom you have always with you, but arouse the emulation of others to follow your footsteps, to their temporal injury, their spiritual detriment, and, it may be, to the scandal of the cause of Christ. How many, by thus "comparing themselves among them-

tion and simplicity in attire. Foreigners are almost universally struck with the gaudy appearance made by our ladies of fashion, in the streets and public promenades of our large cities. English ladies of rank would consider it not exactly *comme il faut*, [as it should be,] to appear in the streets of their metropolis, attired like the fair perambulators of Broadway and Chesnut street. Especially are the eyes of foreigners struck with the appearance of the female members of our city Churches. 'I should take your Church for a theatre, were I to judge by the dress of the ladies,' was the remark made by an English gentleman, after leaving a fashionable congregation of Philadelphia."

The same writer, quotes from an English work, as follows:— "We transgress against the Scripture standard, if the style, or particulars of our dress are designed to attract the eye, win admiration, or gratify our taste for display, or our pride of person or station. It [this *test*] judges the rags of the heathen devotee, and the coarse garb of the monk, as well as the gaudy show of fashion, and the aspiring finery of the lower orders."—*Infant Brothers.*

selves," and acting by the example of others, have become inextricably involved in debt, and have suffered the sacrifice of property, prospects, and good name?

4th. The feelings of others are afflicted by this course. Paul would abstain from meat, for life, if his using it either would lead his weak brother astray, or wound his feelings or conscience. There are many, even in this fashion-loving age, whose feelings are deeply wounded, by seeing the professed disciples of Christ quite even with the most worldly-minded, and vain, in the incessant chase after new fashions and gay apparel. To their feelings you owe respect, which you cannot justly withhold; for they are usually among the most humble and pious of the flock of Christ. And, if it were better for a persecuting enemy, that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of the *little ones* of Christ's flock, how can the Christian stand guiltless, who tramples down alike, the feelings of lambs, sheep, and shepherd, for the gratification of a vain desire for worldly display?

5th. It operates to the prejudice of Christianity with the world; or, at least, to the prejudice of dress-loving Christians. The votaries of fashion know how inordinately their own hearts are set on dress, and how unwilling they would be to sacrifice this idol on the altar of true piety; they feel, that the love of display occupies the place in *their* hearts, that should be possessed by the love of God; and when they see Christians running, side by side, with them, in the same race of fashion, they very reasonably infer, that those Christians are actuated by the same feelings and

motives with themselves ; and, as theirs are condemned by their own consciences, they must conclude, either that Christianity erects a standard, on this subject, less elevated, than that set up by their own consciences, or that fashion-loving Christians disregard in practice the standard of their profession.

But, says a fashionable Christian, “ My heart is not placed on dress ; I rarely think of what I have on. Dress does not hurt me.” Possibly, as the heart is deceitful, and hard to be known, your heart may have deceived you in this matter ; and it is worth while to make the examination, by an easy and sure test. If your heart is not on your flaunting finery, its surrender will prove a very small sacrifice, and you will be most ready to give it up at the call of duty ; but, if the objects of saving money for the poor, and the cause of God—of avoiding an example that may lead others to ruin, wound the feelings of disciples of your Lord, and cause the world to speak reproachfully of you, or of the religion of Jesus Christ, have not power enough to induce you to make the sacrifice, then be assured, as God liveth, and as thy soul liveth, the love of the world, in this one of its forms, has fast hold on your heart, and there is danger that the love of the Father will be driven out, or that it has no lodgment there. When men of the world find us actuated by the same spirit, and pursuing the same follies with themselves, all their inferences must be unfavorable to religion, or to its professors.

Methodists were once distinguished for great plainness of apparel, and this should be the case still, and ever ; yet, it has been conjectured, that the early Methodists

fell into one error on this subject, and that some of the few who still bear a testimony against extravagance in dress, fail to escape the same error. That supposed error was a want of consistency, in speaking zealously against the wearing of jewelry, and articles of dress of fashionable pattern; while “costly apparel,” no matter how expensive, if made in antiquated style, escaped all censure. We have known a minister of the gospel, while clothed in broadcloth, worth fifteen dollars a yard, and wearing a watch worth two hundred dollars, (which he did not consider jewelry, or apparel,) to denounce a young sister, with much severity, for wearing a riband, or ring, worth fifty cents—protecting himself by the *plainness* of his dress; and, we have known a preacher, distinguished for the costliness (but plainness also) of his clothing, actually to procure the expulsion of a member, for wearing an article of dress, the cost of which was twenty-five cents.* This sort of inconsistency cannot well be sustained; and, the consequence is, that the subject has come to be almost wholly neglected: and now, even some of our preachers, are as much distinguished, as models of fashion and elegance of dress, as their predecessors were for plainness. This

* Mr. Wesley in his “Thoughts on Dress,” says: “To be singular, merely for singularity sake, is not the part of a Christian: I do not, therefore, advise you to wear a hat of such dimensions, or a coat of a particular form. Rather, in things that are absolutely indifferent, that are of no consequence at all, humility and courtesy require you to conform to the customs of your country.” In the same place, he lays down, as rules for dress, 1. “That your apparel be not *expensive*. 2. That it be not *gay*, *airy*, or *showy*; not in the point of the fashion.”—*Wesley’s Works*, Vol. vi. p. 546.

is clearly wrong, not only on account of the bad example set in the matter of costliness of apparel, (which, on the part of a preacher, is peculiarly pernicious,) but, on account of the example of unbecoming fashionableness, indicating a love of dress, and fondness for display, poorly according with the spirit of the gospel.

A minister owes some respect, too, in this matter, to his professional character. He should be grave and dignified in his dress, as well as his manner and whole bearing; and, when a minister affects the *dandy*, in the style of his dress, or puts on gay or gaudy colors, he lowers the dignity of his office, and, to some extent, brings both it and himself into contempt. For a similar reason, it is in bad taste, and ridiculous, for a man, or woman, advanced in years, to assume the gay apparel of dress-loving youth; and, in both cases, the offence is against good taste and common sense, as directly as against the requirements of the gospel of Christ. To appear, in dress, neat, clean, becoming our age and calling, is a duty enjoined by our religion; but, a passion for fine clothing, indicates mental weakness, and is calculated to injure our own enjoyment, and do much injury to others, and the cause of piety. Let us act, in this thing, from principle—avoiding extremes and inconsistency—and then may we come back to the old paths, to the good way, and cease to be a reproach, in the mouth of the enemy, on account, either of a “costly apparel,” antiquated affectation of plainness, or of unbecoming gaiety and foppishness of dress.

CHAPTER XIX.

AMUSEMENTS. TAKING SUCH DIVERSIONS AS
CANNOT BE USED IN THE NAME OF THE
LORD JESUS. DANCING.

To estimate the effects of dancing, we must take it in the ball-room, where its *object* is reached, and not in its preparatory exercises—Injurious to health—The enemy of mental improvement—Opinion of *Chesterfield*—Moral influence bad—Descriptive scene—General character of the whole—analysis of it—Waltzing—Opinion of it, by a high literary authority.

AMUSEMENTS.—“THE TAKING SUCH DIVERSIONS AS CANNOT BE USED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.”—We are required to do all we do, in the name of the Lord Jesus. But, we are met, here, by the question, “Are we, then, not permitted any amusements, any recreations, as Christians?” Certainly we are; but, they are such as can be used in the name of the Lord Jesus. The idea, that religion is to render us gloomy, dissocial, or morose, is a great error; for, Christians, only, have good right to be cheerful; and, the real Christian enjoys the blessings of this life, and even the recreations permitted to rational and immortal natures, as no other person can. But, the amuse-

ments most common, and popular, in the world, are alike at war with interest and duty, with reason and religion. And, as they are not presented to us in forms of gross immorality, but under the name of "innocent recreations," they are the more dangerous, because the more plausible and insinuating; and, it is, therefore, our duty, to guard against their seductive influences. Some of these will be noticed; and, *first*,

DANCING.—With a staid Christian, it is sufficient reason for not participating in this common amusement, that it "cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus." But, there are other considerations which should have weight with all reflecting minds. Its general tendency is adverse to health, to mental improvement, and to moral and religious habits. It has been pleaded for, it is true, on the ground of its being highly promotive of health; and, so, possibly, it might be, in circumstances under which it is never practiced, as its *object*. But, we must take it at the point where its *object* is gained—in the ball-room—and not where the exercise is a mere preparation for that public exhibition. Persons may dance in private—quite alone—and sometimes do so, not for the enjoyment, or benefit, of that solitary exercise, but solely to qualify themselves to act their part with better grace, on the grand arena of public exhibition. Here, then, take the dancer, and show us the sources of health in this exciting scene. The actors are about to exhibit themselves, as public spectacles, to be gazed at by others. This, the

young lady, ambitious of ball-room distinction, is well apprised of; and, acting accordingly, will aim to arrange every thing, concerning her person and apparel, with a view to make the most favorable impression, by her appearance and performances; and, consequently, instead of being attired in a manner suited to reason and circumstances, as on ordinary occasions, her apparel is light, and insufficient for the protection of her health. Thus arrayed, she enters the crowded saloon, and, under high excitement, engages in the performances of the evening, and continues her unwonted exertions, most, or all, of the night. Finally, in a state of fatigue, perspiration, and high susceptibility of atmospheric impressions, she exchanges the heated air of the room for the chilling atmosphere of the street; and, in all probability, a cold seizes her lungs, or a fever takes hold on her brain, and, in instances, innumerable, lingering disease, or speedy death, has been the result.

It is not in point, to prove, whether the dancing exercise of little boys and girls, at dancing school, or at home, is healthful, or otherwise, as these are but incidental to the ulterior design of dancing—the public display. With regard to mental improvement, few, or none, will assert, that it is promoted by this amusement. The whole tendency is, to call the mind away from all sober thought, and mental action, calculated to improve, and to superinduce a sort of mental vacancy, prejudicial to all intellectual exertion. Even Lord Chesterfield, that prince of worldlings, who advocated dancing because it was

fashionable, pronounces it "*a silly, trifling thing.*"* And he might have added, truthfully, that a large proportion of its votaries vindicate the justness of this denunciation, by showing themselves to be *silly triflers*; for, how very few who distinguish themselves in this boasted accomplishment, are distinguished by mental vigor, or intellectual culture. Indeed, it rests its merit, at least, in part, on the influence it exerts, in freeing the mind from the pressure of mental toil, and serving as a relaxation from wasting study and consuming care. There are relaxations from the severity of intellectual labor, which, like needful rest to the body, refresh, and prepare for a more vigorous prosecution of our work; but, when mental *dissipation* is substituted for necessary relaxation, the effect is as that on the body, when enervating excesses take the place of needful repose; instead of being thereby reinvigorated, to resume duty with increased strength and improved relish, both the ability and the inclination have suffered deterioration. And so it is in the instance under notice; not only have science and literature no place in the ball-room, but, both its *preparations* and *recollections*, tend, directly, to banish these from the mind, and to fill their places with fascinating frivolities, which quickly take root, and stubbornly oppose a return to sober study, or rational labor.

* "Dancing, though a *silly, trifling thing*, is one of those established *follies* to which people of sense are sometimes obliged to conform; and, if they do, they should be able to perform it well."—*Chesterfield*.

Let the student employ his thoughts about the preparations for a dancing party, for a week or two, then mingle in its giddy excitements, and occupy his mind, for days afterwards, with recollections, impressions, and suggestions, furnished by the occasion, and it will require no common, or feeble exertion of his will, to force himself back again, into the path of intellectual duty, now made repulsive, by the gay and *thoughtless* pleasure of which he has been quaffing. It is much easier to play the dancing dandy, than to earn distinction by ploughing glebes of classic lore, or mastering the difficulties of a profession ; and, this, with the fact, that those shallow accomplishments are more prized, by many, than that which is enduring, and of real worth, which has, no doubt, induced many a young man, who might have filled a useful place in society, to take the easier road to unenviable distinction, and rely on his ball-room accomplishments, to secure for him, among the admirers of such great qualities, both a *companion* and a *fortune*. Instances are not wanting, in which a successful *debut* in the ball-room, has rendered a young man utterly worthless for ever after.

The *moral* evils, however, of this fashionable folly, are still more to be depreciated than either of the classes of evil named. And most of the reasoning applied to the other phases of the subject, are equally in place here. So, what tends to injure the health, or destroy the life, if wilfully persisted in, is sinful in the sight of God ; and what tends to the dissipation of the mind, and to the filling of it with chaffy, frivolous trash, must be still more detrimental to moral improvement, and

religious enjoyment, than, even, to intellectual. The ball room is an exhibition, where men and women go to exhibit themselves for admiration and excitement; and all that can be made to bear on these objects, is resorted to; and person, dress, manners, spirit, and action, are all exhibited to accomplish the proposed end. Hence, the body is distorted, or exposed, even, sometimes, to its own martyrdom, to impress the beholder with an idea of the beauty of its form and proportions; and, when the admirer turns to look again upon that enchanting loveliness, it is the banquet of the loathsome grave worm. But, without carrying these items severally out to their results, let us take the case of a young lady, just coming out to take her place in the great world of fashion. We may suppose she has been reared by religious parents, but, who regard dancing as an innocent amusement, and pretty accomplishment. She receives her first invitation to a great dancing party, and the note which conveys it causes her heart to palpitate with hope and fear. Consent is given by the parents, and now comes the preparation. To attend a fashionable ball, without an elegant ball-dress, and other appropriate accompaniments, is not to be thought of; and, to save the idolized daughter from mortification, her apparel must be equal, in splendor and costliness, to the very chiefest. Hence follows a criminal squandering of money, to feed the pride and flatter the vanity of the daughter; or, it may be, an embarrassing debt is contracted for this worthy object. A week is to intervene before the coming off of the grand *fête*; and how is that week appropriated? The poor child

has, perhaps, been taught to think herself religious; but how much religion does she enjoy, or manifest, during that period of preparation? Does she attempt to pray? Cotillions and waltzes swim through her imagination; and God is not in all her thoughts. Does she attempt to join in singing the praise of God, in family or church devotion? Another music, now, to her more interesting, fills her mind. Does she try to meditate? Dresses, jewelry, gauze, and lace, entangle her reflections, and her thoughts take not hold on heaven.

The time at length arrives; and her little heart swells almost to bursting with perturbation and the play of conflicting passions. She has danced many a time, as a child, at dancing school, but never appeared before a gay multitude, as part and parcel of a public show; her former exercises were only in preparation for this great event, and she now painfully fears for the result of the experiment, she so ardently desires to make, and almost wishes she had not been invited. She may lack presence of mind, or may commit some serious blunder, or make an utter failure, and die of mental mortification; in short, she knows not what to do; her feelings are uncontrollable, and never did she feel, so much, the need of help and direction. Perhaps her Sunday school recollection brings to her mind—"Commit thou all thy ways unto Him, and He shall direct thy steps;" but, poor child, she cannot do what she is about, "in the name of the Lord Jesus," and, therefore, can claim the aid of none of God's great and precious promises. She dares not ask God for his help, or his blessing, but

must rely on herself entirely. Oh, daughters! whenever you get to a point where you cannot ask God's blessing, and claim his succor, be intreated to pause, and turn back instantly, as you value peace of conscience, and the hope of heaven.

But, finally, her toilet is completed, and she goes, without daring even to *think* a prayer for the blessing of God, to the gay whirlpool, which has swept down thousands to ruin, and casts herself into the midst of its dizzying whirl. All is brightness and glitter around her; brilliant lights, sparkling eyes, winning smiles, flattering speeches, splendid ladies, elegant gentlemen, exhilarating music, mellow wines, luxuriant viands, all combine to cast her into a wild delirium of mental intoxication. She feels unlike her former self—afloat, and in the whirl, her excitement intense, and her moral balance lost—but, whither she is drifting, she knows not, and is too happy, in the gaiety and adulation with which she is surrounded, to think of any thing but the present dreamy bliss. In such a state of pleasing bewilderment, all the *pores* of the soul are thrown open, and temptation, angelically arrayed, is rather invited than resisted. She is relying, alone, on her own strength; but, of that strength, she is, unconsciously, shorn; and it will be a miracle of mercy, if that poor girl leaves the enchanted castle without having her principles of piety and morality weakened at some point. And still she drives before the gale; excitement nerves her for exertion, and *set after set*, she continues to dance on, until breaking dawn calls “man to go forth to his labor, and beasts of prey to lie down in their dens.”

She at length leaves the scene of fairy enchantment, and is escorted to her home by a worthless fopling, whose only commendation is his *pedal* attributes, and his arts of flattery; but these are *all* to her now; intellectual excellence, and moral qualities, she now looks on as too tame and common place to shine in the new firmament in which she has just been enstalled “a bright particular star.” Her imagination excited, her passions stimulated and perverted, she lends a willing ear, and a confiding heart, to the honeyed words of the plausible deceiver. But, suppose that, in her mental intoxication, she is not betrayed into any violation of the proprieties of life, yet, could that fluttering little heart, before so innocent, be now rendered transparent, and be exhibited before the company in which she has shone, with all its vain and evil imaginings, its passions indulged, and temptations unresisted, written truly, there never would she, again, hold up her head; for, when moments of sober reflection return, she must confess to her own heart, that she has fallen, deeply fallen, in the tone of her moral feeling.

But more: many of the very worst matches ever formed—matches which have victimized warm and confiding hearts to the cupidity or passion of worthlessness, could never have been made but by the aid of the ball-room’s delirious inebriation. It is, indeed, a match-making machinery throughout, but, of the very worst and most dangerous character; for its office is to bring the sexes together in matrimonial alliance; not by the power of sober reason and pure reflection, but by preternaturally exciting the passions;

thus imbruting our natures, and dishonoring the holy ordinance of marriage.

After a brief, disturbed, feverish sleep, our young lady arises; but, oh! how changed in feeling and appearance. The fountains of thought and feeling have been tainted, and her very countenance wears a look of dissipation. If she would kneel to God in morning prayer, as was her wont, she feels that her access is obstructed, or quite cut off by the heart-sins of her revel; and, probably, she either abandons prayer entirely, or returns to her former course of duty, renouncing the scenes which have deeply wounded her conscience, and robbed her of her innocence and peace. For, unless the pleasures of the ball-room be *loved*, they cannot be *enjoyed*, and will not be followed; but, if the heart be imbued with the love of those sensual pleasures, they will banish the love of God, of duty, and devotion.

We call them "sensual pleasures," and such they are, whatever has been said to the contrary, as any one who analyzes at all must confess. The dress, the music, the conversation, the beverages, and the dance, are all so many appeals to the passions and animal appetites. It has been said, with strong semblance of truth, that the standard rule for a ball dress is, so to dispose it as to give the fullest scope to the imagination, without going so far as to repel and disgust, by leaving the imagination too little play. The music, too, is of the most exciting kind—and the power of music to stir the passions, when well adapted to that end, is very great. And besides, in a large proportion of cases, the lively music performed on those occasions, is known to be set to words of voluptuousness or sensuality, such as

decency would exclude from genteel society ; yet, though the *air* only is discoursed by the instruments, the mind's associations call up the *words* and wake the passions. And much of the conversation of these assemblies consists of a sort of diplomatic play of *double-entendre*, in which, as in the instance of dress, the language is susceptible of a chaste meaning, but so framed as to carry the thoughts beyond, in regions of less purity.

With regard to drinks, who ever saw a fashionable ball without wine, at least, if not other intoxicating beverages? And when a young man or woman goes to a ball, it is to enjoy it, in all its elements ; nay, it would appear little short of ridiculous affectation in one to go for all the other indulgencies of the place, and yet profess scrupulousness on the subject of drinks. And, if he should, the other co-operating forces will probably soon show him his inconsistency, and lead him to a free participation in this also. This stirs the blood, and inflames the passions, and has been the source of incalculable mischiefs in the ball room. Men, never intoxicated elsewhere, have fallen by this gilded snare ; and many a sot, who now dishonors the name of a reputable family, received his first impulse in that fearful direction, in the gay assembly room, and from the potion, perhaps, administered by fair hands to his then reluctant lips. And quiet as it is kept, many a lady fair, under the combined power of all the other exciting influences of the place and occasion, has been led to quaff quite too deeply of the wine cup. And when the heart is first intoxicated with deceitful pleasures, there is no grosser form of the vice into which we are not in danger of being led. Hence, in

instances innumerable, young men, under the power of these strong excitements, have attempted to show themselves off as men of spirit, by offering insults to others, or by promptly resenting, as such, what were not insults; and the earth has drunk much blood, that has flown as the result of fool-born quarrels of the assembly room.

But is the dance, itself, the ostensible object of the whole affair? is it any purer in nature and tendency than its accompaniments?

Could we divest dancing of all the sanction of custom, or had we never seen or heard of such an amusement, every man of sense, and woman of modesty, would instantly pronounce it grossly immodest, and not to be tolerated in civilized society. The artfully arranged *pantomime*, the *turns*, the *touching* passes, the advance and retreat, the oft repeated grasp, and pressure of the hand, the swimming waltz performed in each other's embrace,* all these have a

* On the subject of waltzing, we take leave to make a quotation from one of the most respectable literary periodicals of the country, and one very far removed from bigotry, or religious strictness. The editor does not make it a question of morals, but simply one of decency.

“We claim to be neither old nor ascetic, nor even jealous of those amusements in which we are neither ‘accomplished’ nor ashamed to participate; but we are compelled to say, that the modern fashion of waltzing is an indecent exhibition, that ought to be imperatively banished from respectable drawing-rooms. It is one of those foreign importations, that never should have been encouraged by the class of citizens who give character and tone to American society. It had its origin in the voluptuous orgies of the ungodly Parisians, and is a gross scandal even to that city of licentiousness. It is nothing but a hug and

natural language, more eloquent in its appeal to the passions than its translation into words could be. Why is it, if this pure and rational enjoyment has not its source in the love of animal excitement, that, in all its forms and phases, the bringing of the sexes into personal contact in various manners is indispensable, is the real *sine qua non?* If exercise, or even *pedal dexterity*, were the primary objects, this would not be necessary. Probably, no modest young girl ever did witness a fashionable dance, by men and women for the *first* time, without an involuntary blush.

We would not, however, ascribe the bad motives in which, doubtless, this amusement originated, to all those who engage in it, nor all the bad effects which it is naturally calculated to produce; the object, here, is to state the matter in a just and truthful light, without applying the subject to individual cases.

a whirl; and when a couple embrace for such a violent performance, modesty would suggest that every other person should leave the room. And yet, this waltzing, seems to be the entire end and aim of the lives of all the 'fashionable young men,' of New York. Many of them, we presume, have whirled through space enough during the past season, if reduced to a straight line, to reach across the Atlantic. So accustomed are they to this ridiculous motion, that they cannot even walk the streets without teetering upon their toes. How unlike the stalwart youth, who became the heroes of the Revolution, and the Fathers of the Republic! What a miserable muster these dainty snips would make, on an occasion to 'try men's souls!' Their children, too, if they ever have any, will be born to an inheritance of feebleness, and grow up candidates for the poor house. Oh, for the good old days of Sir Roger de Coverly! when strength, and not effeminacy, was considered the highest attribute of manhood. Think of Richard of the Lion Heart, and then look at a Broadway dancing dandy."

CHAPTER XX

AMUSEMENTS.—DANCING—CONTINUED.

The experience and consciousness of Christians, who have tried it, condemn the practice—The refining influence of dancing considered—Dancing an amusement of uncivilized men, lacking mental enjoyments—The propriety of teaching children to dance considered—Innocence of dancing, “in itself,” considered—The world expects better things of us, at this day.

A PRACTICAL testimony, as to the character and influence of dancing, may be found, in the fact, that, whenever a devotee of this alluring amusement becomes deeply convicted of sin, this is one of the things, he, in all cases, feels called on, by his conscience, to repent of; and, when such an one becomes soundly converted to God, his back is as certainly turned on his old idol, as that of a converted Hindoo is on Juggernaut, when he fully embraces Christ; and, in all cases, when a professor of religion falls in love with dancing, he ceases to enjoy the life of God in his soul, and, in nearly all, he openly abandons all pretensions to religion. And, further, we have never known a professor of religion to become the advocate, or even apologist, of dancing, until he had, at least, grown cold, or entirely backslid, in religion. In this case, every one who has had experience in the matter, has, within himself, a certain consciousness, that this amusement is at war with

religious enjoyment, and has been injurious to his or her soul; and, where *consciousness*—which is the highest evidence, and foundation, of all other—is the rule of *conscience*, there the latter may be safely relied on, as a sure guide; but, conscience, guided by unerring consciousness, does testify against this amusement; and, it is only by blunting the sensibility of conscience, that it will allow any peace to one, in pursuing such a course. It is, indeed, absurd to suppose, that one enamored of the loveliness of religion, and engrossed with its sublime enjoyments and prospects, should find comfort and pleasure in that which regards not God, tends to let down the intellectual nature, and sensualizes the whole man.

But, still it is contended for, as necessary to polish and refine men. This we shall be better able to appreciate, by analyzing the matter, down to its elements. It does not refine, as regards morals, for it has no moral code of its own, and has existed under all the bloody and barbarous moral codes, as well as all the more civilized, of every age and country. Nor does it refine the mental faculties, seeing it affords no food for intellectuality, but has respect, only, to the animal and social qualities of our nature. Then, it is the *manners*, and the *motions*, which are to be brought under its refining power. Very well; but, is it dancing, itself, or its incidents, or accompaniments, to which we are indebted, for a refining agency? If the latter, *they* are not dependent on the act of dancing for their existence, and can operate independently of it as

effectually as in connection with it; for, whether it be the *music*, the *wine*, the improving conversation, the “*good society*,” or the apparelling, each and all of these can be enjoyed, and their refining benefits received, without any action of the *fête*, or, at least, any such as is called dancing, as effectually as with it. How, then, does dancing, itself, refine society, with regard to manners? No way. For, though in connection with dancing, intercourse with polite society may improve the manners, and really does so, it will hardly be contended, that refined manners are to be found only in dancing society; and, if to be found in other associations of life, then it can be had there, without going to the dancing saloon for it. And, as it respects the grace of motion, it is, at best, but an inferior accomplishment, too dearly purchased, when procured at the cost—moral and mental—usually attendant on its attainment through that channel. But, though the genuflections of body, taught in dancing, may instruct the pupil how to perform certain movements, yet, these are but *dancing movements*, and have little to do with even the *grace* of motion, as applicable to the ordinary intercourses of society. So, military discipline teaches the *grace* of motion, even more effectually than dancing does; but, it is *military grace*, for which men have, in the usual walks and duties of life, about as much use, as for the *dancing grace*. They may be appreciated by the soldier and the dancer, but other portions of society cannot readily be made to feel their importance, or to estimate those who possess them, above all others, simply on that account.

It is true, that, to exercise the limbs and body freely, and frequently, tends to ease and freedom of action, but is no more true of dancing than of other exercises; and, it were easy to prescribe a system of exercise, which, in this respect, would be much better than ordinary dancing. In point of fact, no lady, or gentleman, can be known to be an accomplished dancer, simply by their superior grace of action in other spheres; and a grace, designed only for display, which cannot be recognized by its own exhibition, is valueless, in the estimation of all, save its own possessor. In short, well educated men and women, accustomed to intercourse with good society, though they may never have seen a ball-room, or a dancing school, are found to possess as much refinement of manners, and as much appropriate ease, grace, and dignity of motion, as Celeste, Elssler, or any of their humble worshippers. It has, to be sure, been often remarked, that some who have acquired this refining grace, indicate its possession by an affectation of airs and graces differing from others; but, even in this instance, the high attainment is not so much known by its own manifestation, as by its announcement on the part of the possessor.

But, as the idea, that dancing is a necessary accomplishment in good society, and one belonging to a high state of civilization and refinement—we say, as this idea is inducing many Christian parents to lead their children into most perilous temptations—we will follow it up a little farther. There are arts, sciences, literature, and even *vices*, peculiar to cultivated and highly civilized society; and this

fact, might, naturally enough, be expected to give those things character and rank, even above their merits; but, dancing has no such claim. So far from being peculiar to a high state of refinement, it is, and, from the earliest dawn of history, ever has been, the universal attendant on every degree of barbarism, even the very lowest. There is no people so imbruted, so ignorant, so rude, as not to be addicted to the *accomplishment* of dancing. And the fact explains itself; it is an unintellectual amusement, productive of animal excitement, and ministering food to the passions; and, is, therefore, peculiarly adapted to the tastes, condition, and morality, of barbarous people, who neglect mental and moral culture, and look for enjoyment, only, to animal appetites and passions.

Now, we of the nineteenth century—and Christians, too—are going back to the savages of four thousand years ago, to learn, from them, refinement and accomplishments! Did dancing *refine* them? If not, how is it to have any better effect on us? We are not so generally dancers as they were, nor have we attained any thing like equal perfection, in the noble art. Again: the negroes in your kitchen, or quarter, are, by nature and practice, better dancers than their owners. They learn, even by stealth, new and difficult dances, more readily than those who devote their time and money to the acquisition. Their organs of *time* and *tune* are more perfect; and, in their performances, there is an exactness, greatly excelling the Caucasian race. Are they, therefore, more refined than we? Still further:

there can scarcely be found a ball, or dancing party, but is dependent on a negro *fiddler*, not only for their music, but also for instructions—words of command—directing their movements; and, without which, they could not proceed in their rational amusement. A company of wealthy and educated ladies and gentlemen, would feel greatly humbled, in having to put themselves under the instruction of an ignorant negro, in any matter of science or literature; but, there is appropriateness in the arrangement, in this case, because, the whole is an *animal affair*; and, where the mere human animal can be procured, to direct the machinery, it seems more fit, than to degrade an intellectual being to such a vocation.

But, says a Christian parent, “I am opposed to balls and public dancing parties, but I think there is no harm in dancing *itself*, and, especially, I think it very proper, in children, to dance, and, therefore, I allow mine to attend dancing school.” Now, if we understand you, you are teaching your children to dance, as children, and do not intend them to continue the practice in adult years. If this be true, well may your children pray you “Lead us not into temptation;” for, the idea of educating or qualifying persons, at a great expense of time and money, to do something they are never to do after childhood, is, in itself, a contradiction so glaring, that even children cannot fail to see it, and to doubt the sincerity of your professions in the matter. You give your son a profession, but you do not intend him to follow it; or, more in point, you teach your son to drink intoxicating

liquors, as a child, but you would not, on any account, have him to drink, after reaching manhood, lest he should become a drunkard; you teach him to play at games of chance, and to bet on the result, as a child, but you would rather see him in his grave, than see him a gambler, as a man. How absurd: you say, in a manner more strong than words—that is by your whole course of conduct—that you wish your daughter to become a dancer, in the one case, as you do in the others of your son, that you desire him to be a drunkard or a gambler; and the feeble contradiction of this by your words, can have no effect, in the least, to check the natural tendencies of your conduct, in producing its legitimate results. If you so educate your daughter, unless she happens to take a dislike to the refining accomplishment, or to get a better stock of true religion than her parent now has, she will be eager to go to the first public ball to which she may be invited; and, unless your own growth in grace prevents it, you will, as surely, grant her the privilege as she asks it, though you may, for appearance sake, disguise your consent, in some convenient form for your protection from censure. And remember, oh, foolish father or mother, that, into whatever sins or follies your daughter may fall, in this perilous adventure, for them God will hold you accountable at the judgment of the great day. If you cannot send your child to dancing school, “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” you cannot do it at all with a good conscience. You can pray, and so ought to do, for God’s blessing on the proper studies of your child: can you do this, when you start her to dancing school,

to learn folly, vanity, and irreligion? You dare not do it, and, thus, insult heaven. Then refrain from your evil and dangerous course.

As to the harmfulness, or innocence of “dancing, in itself,” as the favorite phrase is, it is not necessary to debate the point, until you show us the thing. If young ladies were in the habit, for example, of shutting themselves up in their rooms, alone, and dancing to circulate their blood, with no intention of ever being seen in such performance, it is not probable that there would be much complaint about it; but who dances alone, except by way of practising for a public exhibition? This is dancing “in itself,” if the phrase means any thing; and, whether harm, or not, no one practises it. Even at the children’s dancing school, you have nothing like dancing “in itself;” for, in the first place, your little daughter will not go at all, unless you minister to her young pride and vanity, by dressing her finely; and, when there, her little child’s heart is excited with emulation, ambition, vanity of performance, and, already, she is luxuriating in anticipation of the *eclat* she is to secure, and the conquests she is to make in the ball room, when she becomes a young lady. So, that what you contend for, has no existence; and, what you wish to protect yourself in finds no countenance from that quarter.

A darker age did exist, in which the Churches tolerated this evil to their great detriment: but now, enlightened non-professors generally condemn it, in Christians, as inconsistent with their profession, though many cold professors advocate it. We happened to be present, when a Church member advocated dancing in

presence of a most accomplished dancer, and highly cultivated lady, apparently, with the expectation of securing her approbation for his liberality. She responded, that she was very fond of dancing, and thought it not amiss in her; but, said she, "should I ever make a profession of religion, I should think it exceedingly improper in me to engage in any such frivolous amusements." The world knows what our holy religion demands; and, when we advocate what they believe God condemns, they, very naturally, lose confidence in our Christian profession. Let us take heed, therefore, lest we be found standing in the way of sinners.

CHAPTER XXI.

AMUSEMENTS.—THE THEATRE.

Theatrical amusements have been in use for, say, 2400 years—Of Grecian origin—Referred to celebrations of Bacchus—Notice of those orgies—A car, or cart, the first stage—then the temple of Bacchus—Account of early Theatres—Success in tragic composition and acting decided by judges—Comedy much less respectable—Roman drama derived from the festival of Harvest Home—in several respects resembling the rites of Bacchus—Notice of Roman dramatists—Difference between ancient and modern drama, in favor of the former—Neither history, eloquence, nor morality to be gained there—Shakspeare deficient in purity—The notion of reproving vice in this way fallacious—Cannot be taken in the name of the Lord Jesus, and, therefore, improper for Christians.

AMUSEMENTS.—THE THEATRE.—Perhaps no amusement, dancing excepted, has so long held ascendency over the minds and hearts of thoughtless millions, as theatrical exhibitions. This amusement is of Grecian origin, and its commencement is referred to the sixth century, before Christ, say, 2400 years ago. A hurried glance at the origin, and early history of the Drama, may be interesting to some, and may be of service in enabling us to estimate its value justly.

All writers, so far as we know, trace theatrical representations to the Grecian custom of celebrating the praises of Bacchus, the god of *wine*. The festivals

of Bacchus were celebrated in the grape season, not only by “joyous dances, and the chanting of hymns,” but, “with riots and excess. The priestesses, called Bacchantes, ran wild upon the mountains, with dishevelled hair, and torches in their hands, filling the air with shouts, and chanting hymns to his praise. During their celebration, the people ran about the city in masks, or with their faces daubed with the dregs of wine.”* “The feast of Bacchus were noisy, and those who attended them were often intoxicated. These feasts were called Bacchanalia, Revels, and Orgies.”† “They covered themselves with the skins of wild beasts—had drums, horns, pipes, and other instruments calculated to make a great noise. Men and women ridiculously dressed, appeared night and day in public; and, imitating drunkenness, and dancing with the most indecent gestures, ran in throngs about the mountains and forests, screaming and howling furiously; the women, especially, seem more outrageous than the men, and, quite out of their senses, in their furious transports, invoked the god with loud cries. To these ceremonies, others were added, obscene to the last excess, and worthy the god who chose to be honored in such a manner. The spectators gave in to the prevailing humor, and were seized with the same frantic spirit. Nothing was seen but dancing, drunkenness, debauchery, and all that the most abandoned licentiousness can conceive of, gross and abominable.”‡ Plato declared, that he had, on these occasions, seen “the *whole city* of Athens drunk at once.”

* History of Greece. † Mythology. ‡ Rolin.

In a soil thus prolific of crime the most shameless, grew up the Drama—miscalled, the “school of morals,” and has generally been productive of a class of morals, little in conflict with those of the obscene orgies from which it emanated.

Thespis, by way of adding something to the *rational* amusements of the Bacchanalia, introduced the custom of having one speaker, or actor, to appear before the multitude, and amuse them with recitations. For convenience, he contrived a sort of car, or cart, in which the recitations were delivered; and this was the first form of the stage. Soon, however, the Thespian cart was superceded by a permanent stage, which, most appropriately, was established in the temple of the drunken god—Bacchus.

More actors were added to the lone reciter of the cart; masks, dresses, and scenery were introduced; and soon a regular theatre grew up, upon which little *real* improvement has been made for the last two thousand years. Indeed, the theatre of two thousand years ago, possessed some points of decided superiority, over that of this day. Instead of shutting up the auditors, in the exhausted and unhealthy atmosphere of a crowded room, for half the night, the Grecians assembled in the morning, in the pure open air—usually, on a hill-slope, enclosed only by a wall; and their theatre was, also, a place for the populace to meet in, on great public occasions, and to deliberate on matters of great importance. It was not with them, a mercenary, catch-penny business, on the part of actors or managers, and a contrivance for wasting time and money on the part of speculators; but the whole community was invited to

meet during a festival, in which they were wont to suspend labor, to witness a contest of talent—of intellectual power, between the authors of the various pieces brought forward for exhibition; in which contest the actors were merely agents for, and secondary to, the authors; and, at the close, an award of honor was given, by appointed judges, to him whose tragedy possessed the highest merit. How very different was this from the applause of boot heels, and walking sticks, awarded by an enlightened audience of this day, to the buffoonery, or mountebankism of talentless buskinéd loafers.

This approving award of the judges was the highest ambition of the great dramatic writers. It was the glory of *Æschylus*, that he held ascendency by their decree, till his fifty-sixth year: and of *Sophocles*, that the judges, twenty times, conferred on him the crown of victory, for superior merit in that department of composition. But, neither these, nor *Euripides*, ever contended, so far as we know, for a prize in the department of comedy, which they seem to have regarded as beneath the employment of great mental powers, and which is said to have been, “little else than mere mountebank exhibitions.” Of the first comedian, it is stated, that “he wandered about the villages of Attica, with a company of buffoons, reciting ludicrous compositions on a temporary stage.”

It is, evidently, this class of dramatists, and not the more grave and polished authors of Grecian tragedy, to whom nearly all the present race of actors can claim successorship. Much of what was written by *Æschylus*, *Sophocles*, and *Euripides*, would be as

unsuited to the talents of present actors, as to the tastes of present play-goers, and as unacceptable to both, as a moral homily. Aristophanes was almost the only Grecian name of note that was lent to the unworthy cause of comic caricature.

In Rome, as in Greece, the drama cannot boast a very honorable origin, nor a very pure and virtuous line of succession. It originated in the Roman festival of "Harvest home," an observance, in many points, resembling the Grecian Bacchanalian rites. Rome, by commencing her dramatic career with comedy, fixed the popular taste, unchangeably, in favor of that low, and less intellectual class of plays.

The three Roman dramatic writers, who enjoyed reputation above all others, were, Livius Andronicus, Plautus, and Terence. Andronicus was the first Roman writer of regular comedy. He was a *freed man*, and acted in his own plays; "though the Roman law declared the profession of an actor *infamous*, and deprived those who exercised it of the rights of citizens." Plautus, who was son of a *freed man*, enjoyed a much higher reputation than any of his predecessors; yet, a distinguished critic (*La Harp*) has said of him, that he was "disgusting in style and dialogue, and mingling with his wit and humor too much low buffoonery." And Dunlop (*History of Literature*) says of his plays, "They hinge, for the most part, on the love of some *dissolute youth for a courtezan*; his employment of a slave, to *defraud a father* of a sum of money, sufficient to supply his expensive pleasures; and, the final discovery, that his mistress is a *free-born citizen*."

Schlegel also says of him, that his “bold roughness, and his famed jests, betray his intercourse with the lowest classes.” Terence, to be sure, though originally an African slave, was more refined than any of his predecessors; successors he had none, for he was the last of his class, of any respectability. He, however, seems to have aspired to nothing above comedy; and, in his productions were many things, far from possessing the elevation and purity, proper for leading the public taste and principles in a right direction.

We have noted these items, in the early history of the drama in Greece and Rome, because, many of our readers are presumed to be unacquainted with them; and many persons have been taught to look on the classic spring-head of the drama, as possessing a dignity and purity little less than divine.

It is claimed, to be sure, for the modern drama, that its improvements have kept pace with the march of mind, and the progress of society; but, whether the claim be well founded, remains to be established. Points of difference are sufficiently discernible; but, in the more important particulars, the comparison appears, to us, against the modern. With the ancients, *unity* in the whole plot, and all its details, was a capital object. The spectator’s attention was never called off, nor even permitted to wander, from the subject in hand; all the parts of the play were intimately related, and attention was kept directly to the subject, from beginning to ending. This required a closeness of thought, not well suited to

the ideas of perfect relaxation from mental exercise, which seem to prevail among modern patrons of the theatre. Accordingly, in the modern drama—and, especially, the English—intervals, extraneous matter, and a vast extent of time, are brought into the play, to give variety and interest: but, unity is sacrificed. A dramatic hero may now exhibit the exploits of many years, if not centuries, in a single hour; and, it would hardly be inconsistent with the genius of the modern stage, for the buskined hero to capture Tyre, Babylon, and Chepultepec, in the same play.

But, it is time, that we examine the claims of the theatre, as a school of morals and of eloquence, and source of general information.

As to the historical information the theatre is said to impart, the plays containing it have so large an admixture of fiction thrown in, to interest and please—such a disregard of all historical unities, such an amount of misrepresentations and unfilled chasms—that the spectator must be quite familiar with the part of the history which forms the nominal basis of the play, or must refer to the bill, to even know to whom, or to what, it alludes. The spectator will be very likely to be led into historical errors; but, reliable information he cannot obtain from so apocryphal a source.

As to true eloquence, the theatre is among the last places at which it can be learned. It has, we own, a certain style of elocution and oratory; but, even these are suited only to the stage—studied and artificial, extravagant in gesture, unnatural and

violent in expressions of passion. In proof of what we have asserted, it is an acknowledged fact, that, so far from recognizing the stage, as a standard, its elocution is rejected in every other department, even by the votaries of the theatre; and, to say of a speaker, in the pulpit, at the bar, at the hustings, or the forum, that his oratory, his manner, his gestures, are *theatrical*, is a verdict of condemnation, by the universal suffrage of the civilized world. Indeed, it is looked on, by all other public speakers, as little less than actionably slanderous, to speak of them as theatrical in their oratory. And this is the school in which we are recommended to learn true eloquence, by looking on, and listening, while an uneducated popinjay performs his part in eloquent spasms, and “tears a passion to rags, to very tatters.”

There have, it is true, been a few men of real talent, and a smaller number of well educated men, on the stage; but, the proportion is exceedingly small, and even they are compelled, by the law of custom, to pursue the same general course with others.

As to the morality taught on the stage, the whole pretence is delusive; there is no such teaching there. True, there are good moral sentiments sparsely scattered through some of the better plays, but so buried among the rubbish of corruption and licentiousness, as to be more than neutralized. We are told, that vice is there exhibited in its odiousness, and that the lessons of warning are impressive and useful. Aye, truly; treachery, robbery, intrigue,

seduction, and murder, are to be rendered odious to the young, by familiarizing both their exhibition and the artifices attendant on them, to the mind and the feelings; and, the good effect is of the same kind with that resulting from familiarizing the public eye, and mind, with capital executions. And then, too, those crimes are usually seen on the stage, as occurring in high places, or under circumstances calculated to draw you into sympathy with the criminal. We have known many a moral and promising youth hopelessly corrupted, by attending the theatre; but, we have never heard of one being reformed, or improved, by its vaunted lessons of morality.

We speak not, now, of the abuses of the stage, but only of what is styled, *par excellence*, the "legitimate drama." And, even here, examine, for a moment, its best productions—say of the great master of the English drama—*Shakspeare*; and even in his plays are to be found many things inconsistent with refinement of taste, or purity of morals. His better heroes swear, sport, revel, fight—aye, his ladies of quality frequently exhibit traits of questionable propriety, and do not scruple to employ language so indelicate, as that its recital will cause a modest man to blush. And the lauded plays of *Shakspeare*, no man would dare to read in a circle of respectable ladies and gentlemen. Hence, expurgated editions have been published; and we have the "Family *Shakspeare*," in which the *text* is mutilated, interpolations inserted, glosses added, and the work is quite a different thing from the original. This,

however, is done, chiefly for the benefit of the bookseller ; to give the *Bible* of the stage access to the centre-table of the parlor, rather than for the use, or improvement, of the theatre ; for, though a modest play-going lady—we must assume that there are such—would blush, as in duty bound, to have indelicate passages read from Shakspeare in the social circle, this fastidiousness is laid aside when she attends a theatrical representation ; and, while the same offensive passages are brought out on the boards, and rendered doubly emphatic, by the circumstances and manner of exhibition, she holds up her head with blushless fortitude, smiles, criticizes, and applauds, with the nonchalance of a veteran connoisseur.

It might not unreasonably be supposed, that modesty would tolerate that, in the circle of private friendship and social confidence, from which it would shrink in a popular assemblage of strangers ; but the modesty that enjoys, in the mixed multitude, with manifest gust and appetite, that from which it shrinks abashed in private society, may well be regarded as of questionable purity. Custom, however, it must be conceded, perverts the order of nature, and reconciles the feelings to what was, naturally, abhorrent to them : If, then, we suppose that many females, who, from the force of custom and popular sentiment, engaged in the wild indecencies of the Bacchanalia, were possessed of natural modesty, we must attribute the inconsistency, just above mentioned, on the part of modern females, rather to the inherent, perverting, and corrupting influence of the theatre, and to vitiated

popular taste generated by it, than to any original want of the coronet jewel of female virtue, on the part of our ladies. With this concession made, it must still be seen, that the theatre is the natural enemy and active destroyer of female purity.

We have mentioned the name of Shakspeare, not in disrespect to his superior talents—for such he possessed pre-eminently—but because he is, confessedly, the master spirit of the modern drama, and to show that even his productions, conforming to the taste and morals of his day, are not calculated to improve the morals, or tame the unruly passions, but rather the reverse. But, if it be desirable to possess ourselves of the lights and benefits of his productions, this can be more advantageously done by a calm, private reading of an expurgated edition of them, than by drinking from the unfiltered fount waters, that but acquire increased muddiness from the impurity of the conduits through which they flow to us in the theatrical reservoir.

The notion, that vice can be effectually rebuked by a historical exhibition of it, which notion has been employed to give countenance to the theatre form, is entirely delusive. It was, in darker ages, believed, on the same principle, that the effectual mode of restraining vice in communities, was to make most offences capital; and, by the number and barbarousness of public executions, to affright the multitude from crime by an exhibition of its punishment. This theory is now justly rejected; for, it has been found, that the more familiar the public mind is made with public executions, the less are they, and the crimes

which lead to them, dreaded. It is as truthfully said, as poetically—

“ Vice is a monster of so hideous mein,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft—familiar with her face—
We first *endure*, then *pity*, then *embrace*.”

But, in truth, the argument, just now noticed, is the pretext, and not the cause of encouraging the drama. Can any man work his mind into a silly enough mood to believe, that ever a manager got up “ Macbeth ” to prevent his patrons from committing the crimes therein exhibited ; that a moral man ever went to see it to guard himself against the crime of murder ; or, that a murderer ever sought to witness the mock assassination of Duncan, for the purpose of arousing his own conscience to a quickened sense of his guilt ? The very thought is absurd. The whole truth is, that the object of the manager is to get up whatever will produce him the most money ; and that of the play goer, to see that which will afford him the most amusement, the most excitement, without the least reference, on the part of either, to moral results, or any thing else, save the end suggested.

But Christians, at least, should not get out of sight of our text: “ Can this sort of diversion be used in the name of the Lord Jesus ? ” What sort of a spectacle would a Christian lady present kneeling to God on the eve of setting out for the theatre ? Such a prayer might well set all Pandemonium agrin :—“ O Lord, make my soul happy to-night at the theatre. To this end, pour thy Holy Spirit upon thy servant B—,

that, in the edifying character of the pious 'Sir John,' he being kept by thy blessed restraining grace, from getting too drunk to perform his part, may be made a blessing to me, and to all thy children assembled in thy name at the theatre. Bless the 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' throughout, to the strengthening of my graces; and, especially, may the immodest language, and lascivious bearing of the services, be blessed to the crucifying of my unholy affections, and the sanctification of my nature!" All hell, responsive, echoes back, "AMEN."

CHAPTER XXII

AMUSEMENTS.—THE THEATRE—CONTINUED.

The legitimate drama not tolerated, but low comedy, &c.—Actors generally not men of talents—talents find a surer and better reward in other departments—Few actors of high moral character—*Starring*—detrimental to regular operations—could not succeed, but for general lack of talent among players—Devices for attracting attention—the press—Encouragement of courtesans—Associations of the Theatre unfit for Christians—Theatrical amusements waning in popularity.

AMUSEMENTS.—THE THEATRE.—If so little can be said in favor of the “legitimate drama,” in its better condition, what have we to expect from the deep and grovelling degeneracy into which the stage has—very generally—if not universally—fallen, agreeably to the verdict, as well of candid and intelligent playgoers, as of the religious world? It is an acknowledged fact, that the “legitimate drama” will not now be tolerated *alone* at all, and hardly, when connected with the grosser accompaniments with which it is associated. Low comedy, and vulgar farce, have taken, in a great measure, the place of the more sensible and rational class of plays; while comic songs, remarkable neither for good sense, nor delicacy; and dancing, characterized not less by immodest exhibitions of person

and action, than by agility of motion, and perfection of muscular discipline, constitute the nominal auxiliaries, but real and paramount attractions of the theatre. If you select the most dignified and intellectual tragedy to be found in the language, and announce its performance to come off on a certain night, by a *corpse dramatique* the most talented to be found in the civilized world ; and then announce, that, on the same night, at another theatre, in the same city, a low comedy will be performed by a company of uneducated buffoons, to be followed by a dance *ala Elsler*, by a female of questionable virtue, in a half denuded state, the whole to conclude with an “irresistible,” negro song, by a performer whose face only—and not his mind—requires to be disguised, to personate to the life the lowest of the class he assumes the dignity of representing ; and while, in the first case, the house will be thin, or empty, the other will present a full house, aye, a crowd—a rush. The first, has some respect to intellect ; the latter, is purely an animal affair, in which the spectators are supposed to possess animal appetites and passions to be excited, but are not, *practically*, presumed to possess any higher attributes.

With regard to actors of the present day, it is doing them no injustice to say, that, as a class, they possess talents which would not be likely to gain distinction in any other department, a very moderate amount of education, and little general intelligence outside of their respective *parts* in their particular profession. Indeed, neither the present respectability, nor remuneration of a stage actor, is calculated to secure talents, or mental culture of a high order ; such can find a surer and

better reward in professions which enjoy the higher respect of society, and leave open to them the door of prospective preferment. Actors constitute a class, and a *caste* to themselves, in a great measure ; and it is exceedingly difficult for them to pass out from it into other and more respected departments, or professions, if they would ; the odor of the sock and buskin attends them, and operates nothing to their advantage. And, who among respectable play-goers, regards the actors and actresses he so loudly applauds, as suitable associates for himself, his wife, and daughters ? Who among them, would be proud to marry his daughter to an actor, or to see his son a comedian, or the husband of an actress ?

To say, that the grade of talent employed on the stage is quite mediocral, is but to say, that it is suited to its object ; for, though talent may shine to advantage in the lowest spheres, it certainly does not require that of a very high order to commit, recite, and act one's part of a play, especially, when the same words and gestures are to be gone through, throughout a whole professional life.

As to the morals of actors, a few, a very small proportion, have sustained the reputation of a respectable worldly morality ; but the vast majority are regarded as profane, dissipated, dissolute, and utterly immoral ; the last men to be thought of as moral teachers, either by precept, or example. And in daily, and intimate association with men of such character, it is not at all astonishing, that an actress, free from grossly disreputable imputations, is a *rara avis*. Actors and actresses, know right well the moral estimate placed on them as a

class, by community ; the inference is, therefore, not unwarranted, that those who value an untarnished name, will not place themselves in a profession, the very embracing of which is deemed evidence, *prima facia*, of the loss, or lack of that priceless jewel, and, that those who do so, hold it in subordinate estimation. Yet, there have been in our day, and, probably, still are some on the stage, who, in the general acceptation of the term, are moral in conduct. Misfortune, bad counsel, or some other mischance, has given them that direction ; but such are not very likely to remain there permanently, and even while they do, instances have not been wanting, in which their convictions of the evil tendencies of the theatre were such, that they have not permitted their own families to attend its exhibitions.

And, likewise, there are a few men on the stage who possess real talents ; and, indeed, the pecuniary temptation to such, is strong in proportion as talent is rare in that department ; for, they are not only enabled to soar above the common herd, but have the tempting opportunity of "*starring*," as it is technically styled. This *starring*, is said to have operated injuriously to the regular theatre ; because, while the ordinary corpse wake up no interest in the public mind, the announcement of a "*star*," calls out a full house, which again falls off when the *star* disappears. This, however, is evidently, to some extent, a mistake ; a better explanation of the matter would be this : On the one hand, in proportion as the public taste has become purified, and the standard of morals elevated, the theatre has naturally become less popular with the better classes :

on the other, the demand for theatrical amusements having decreased, theatrical talent receives a less encouraging remuneration, and, therefore, the standard of it falls low and lower; and these two, operating mutually, as cause and effect, produce the result mentioned; yet, when an actor of histrionic fame is announced, curiosity, the love of novelty, and hope of agreeable excitement, draw out many who cannot be tempted by the every-day bill of fare of the local corpse.

The degeneracy of the stage, then, has produced a diminution of its patronage; the loss of patronage has produced a deterioration in the standard of theatrical talent; and the low measure of that standard, enables an actor of respectable talent to tower and attract, like an “oak among osiers.” *Starring*, or *giantizing*, can only be successful when paucity of talent creates the demand; for, a star excites no astonishment, in a firmament studded with myriads of equal brilliancy; a giant attracts no wondering gaze, where all are giants. But, if a lack of talent, and of morals, have given birth to starring, the offspring can subsist, or, at any rate, can only fatten, on the vitals of its own mother, and promises to consume the small fry, whose *smallness* gave it birth; and, it may, and, we trust, will, be helpful, in the utter extermination of this spawn of Bacchus. It has, however, for so many hundreds of years, tyrannized over the weak and the dissolute, the seekers of animal excitement, and lovers of sensual pleasure, that every effort which interest, ingenuity, or sensuality, can suggest, is employed, to sustain

it still in being, at the cost of the dear interests of society—physical, pecuniary, intellectual, and moral. Some of these efforts, and devices, might well excite a smile, if they did not superinduce more painful sentiments. When these *orgies*—that, you recollect, was their original name—are to be performed in any city, town, or village, you may see every corner, post, and pillar, disfigured with their huge bills, or *posters*, proclaiming the wonderful talents, and unrivalled performances, of the company, in language the most fulsome and extravagant. Men, who could never have, hopefully, aspired to notice, in any other department, here see their names blazing out, in glaring capitals, in every public place, and in every newspaper of the city.

But, “posters” are not the only form in which the aid of the press is invoked, to give importance to the actors, and success to their performances. A contract is usually made with the publisher of a newspaper, or papers, to print posters and small bills, for the daily use of the theatre; and, into the bargain, is taken, an agreement to publish an advertisement in the paper, daily, of the performances to come off. This is not enough, yet; and the editors of the city have free tickets presented them, and they are expected to puff the individual actors, and to eulogize the whole performance, in the most approved and extravagant style. And, should this not be sufficient inducement, fully, to enlist the editor, if credible rumor may be believed, an additional bonus is frequently offered, as the price of his daily puffs. And, by looking into the papers, and

particularly those that have the bill-printing, free tickets, and a bonus, you may see how faithfully and servilely they perform their part, as “nominated in the bond.” Day after day the *corps dramatique* is lauded, until one might think it such a constellation of genius and talent, as never before shed its splendors on the world. And, should the faithful editor have other amusements, or business, to detain him from the performance, still the stipulated puff is duly forthcoming, at a venture.

But, one other grand attraction of this “school of morals,” must not be entirely overlooked. It is a well known fact, that women of infamous character throng the theatre, in shoals; and are its most constant patrons. This, alone, should cause moral men to be a little backward, in taking their wives and daughters to the known rendezvous of females so justly odious. But, there is another fact, not so generally known, and, yet, never denied, so far as we know, and, doubtless, susceptible of ample proof; that startling fact is, that the class of females alluded to, are not only permitted to attend the theatre, without any effort, by the manager, to render the company more select, but, usually, if not universally, *courtesans are admitted, FREE OF CHARGE*, on account of the benefit they are supposed to confer on the theatre, by attracting young gentlemen to it!

This is a “school of morals,” with a vengeance —a select place, to which we are safely to take our wives and daughters—where female infamy is employed as an attraction, and prostitution is

pensioned, to give *eclat* to the moral teachings, and refining influences, of the play!

And, to such a place, some professors of the pure religion of Christ go, and thus give countenance to all its malign and ruinous influences; aye, Christian ladies have been known so far to forget the dignity of their sex, and the purity of their religion, as to be found in such a place, and in such company. A respectable female—and, surely, a religious one—would feel herself ruinously scandalized, by having it said of her, that she had visited a house of assignation; and, especially, if such disgraceful fact were proven against her; but, such a house is the modern theatre, and, probably, on a larger scale than any that bears that name. In the one case, she would justly expect to be expelled, for life, from respectable society; but, in the other, she speaks, with satisfaction, of the performances, the scenery, the company, and even tells, with a modest smile—but no blush—of what transpired in the “third tier.”

Thank heaven, the theatre has lost its former footing, in this country; has little popularity with moral and intellectual men, and none with the truly religious; its tendency is strongly downward, toward the dishonorable tomb of its mother—the Orgies of Bacchus; and, there, but for the unworthy conduct of recusant professors of religion, probably, ere this time, had its ashes been strewn,

“Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.”

CHAPTER XXIII

AMUSEMENTS.—THE CIRCUS.

Circus *lower*, but more candid than Theatre, for it only professes to amuse with feats of agility and buffoonery—nothing to learn, or to imitate—The whole an animal affair—System of humbug—Manner of *drumming* up patronage—Bad influence on the young, on servants, &c—The actual performance—riding—female performers—clown—idea probably derived from King's Fool—coarse wit of modern clowns—*Model artistes*—Evil effects of the Circus.

AMUSEMENTS.—THE CIRCUS.—Perhaps the *circus* is the next thing in the descending scale of amusements, claiming a passing notice. The theatre professes to teach morals, elocution, refinement; the dancing saloon, to teach the “poetry of motion,” grace of manners, and elegant polish. But what does the *circus* profess? In this, however, it may, with some propriety be said, that the *circus* is entitled to a sort of credit above the others; it makes no false, or delusive professions, as to its object; and pretends to teach nothing, but only to amuse the idle and thoughtless, by exhibitions of agility, or difficulty, by acts and expressions, ludicrous and laughable. The performances of this class of ministers of folly, are chiefly executed on horseback; yet, their most admired feats teach the spectator nothing of horsemanship, for, no man, in the common walks of life, has

any use for the art of playing the mountebank on horseback, nor would he, if he possessed the art, consent, on any terms, to be seen riding in the manner of the circus performers. A young man may try to catch the manner of an actor, esteeming it elegant, or impressive ; a girl may attempt to imitate some movement of Celeste, which she thinks graceful ; but who attempts to reduce to practice what he learns at the circus ? We have, after the visit of a circus, to a town or city, sometimes seen stable boys, as they rode their horses to water, endeavoring to imitate the great masters, from whom they had taken stealthy lessons, with heads thrust through, or under the tent cover ; but, beyond this, we have known of no instances of copying from those elegant models.

The circus may be looked on as the *ne plus ultra of passive animal amusements*. To follow the *dramatis personæ* through a play, requires some exercise of the mental powers ; and, to be qualified to “trip on light fantastic toe,” requires both attention and effort. But here nothing is required but simply the ability passively to be operated on, by the merry-andrewism exhibited.

The whole arrangement and appointments of the circus constitute the perfection of humbuggery ; and, the wonder is, that such a thing can receive any countenance in a civilized country. When a strolling company of equestrian mountebanks is about to visit a place, the first step is, to send forth the announcement. This is done, not only by publishing in all the newspapers, but, chiefly, by enormous, gaudy, and attractive posters, which are put up at such prominent drinking houses, and similar places, as can find extent of wall

sufficient for their display. Those bills exhibit a wonderful perfection in the printer's art; and, to a sensible man, are quite the most rationally, interesting part of the whole affair. When the great day arrives, the *troupe* make their entrance into the city, or town, in most imposing style. First, comes a "magnificent golden chariot, rivaling the Funeral Chariot of Alexander the Great, or the Triumphal Car of Nero, and which cost six thousand dollars." [Such an one was recently sold at Montreal, for \$280, to atone for a fraud on the British revenue laws.] This chariot is filled with musicians, whose brazen braying arouses the attention and wonder of children, servants, and loafers, and stuns the delicate ears of the quiet denizens of the hamlet. Next come the members of the *troupe*, attired in the most fantastic, tawdry, and ludicrous manner imaginable, and mounted on showily caparisoned horses, generally, noble animals, for whose unjust degradation one can scarcely avoid feeling pity. After such a street display, and such an amount of specious promise, it is not marvellous that the uninitiated novice should be all agog, and eager for a sight of the greater things he anticipates in the actual performance. And a reading of the posters, small bills, and advertisements, will be far more likely to increase, than diminish, his desire for sight seeing; for, in truth, they constitute the transcendental of ridiculous and extravagant self-eulogy. We happen to have one of the more modest of these before us—one of the "small bills;" and it is not every man that can equal it in superlatives, and strong expletive, even though heaven, or its glorious Ruler, were his theme. Take a few samples: the thing itself, is the

“*Grand National Circus* :” the performance is to commence with a “*grand* entree of all the *beautiful* horses, and (*beautiful*) riders, entitled the *Glory* of Columbia.” Then the “*incredible performances*” of a “*great and indomitable*” old horse come off. Next, “The *astonishing* and *beautiful* —— will introduce her *splendid* act of horsemanship.” “The *wonderful* —— will go through his *extraordinary* performances.” Another horse, “trained by the *far-famed* L. N.,” is pronounced “the *Wonder* and *Pride* of the equestrian *world*, the *Great* and *Unapproachable*.” “The *champion* of the equestrian *world* will execute his *great magic act* —— in which this *incomparable rider*, will accomplish a series of *terrific* leaps, and almost *superhuman feats*.” After such straining of language, to make the affair appear wonderfully wonderful, and after clambering up to so dizzying a height of moral sublimity, how do you suppose a climax can be superadded ? or how is the bewildered reader ever to get safely down from the giddy height ? By the easiest process imaginable. A few *negro* “*songs and dances in character*,” at once thrust up the spire from the lofty summit of this gorgeous temple of foolery, and let you gently down from it again, to your native earth. This is alike *appropriate* and *humane*. Another instance of judgment and justice is, that of eulogizing the quadrupeds a little above the bipeds, and ascribing to the former, qualities of a rather higher than the latter.

The riders are said, in their performances, to be “*astonishing*,” “*wonderful*,” “*extraordinary*,” &c. ; but one horse is pronounced, “*GREAT* and *indomitable*,”

and another, “*GREAT* and *unapproachable*.” Nothing, it would seem, but a sense of the strict justness of such an award, could induce men to appear on the same bill, with horses, in a relation of inferiority to them.

To suppose, that men of common sense, could be deceived into a belief of the truth, of such extravagant pretensions, is to suppose the existence of a high degree of gullibility. Were men in any other department, to make such professions—to proclaim their transcendent merits in like terms, as physicians, lawyers, or artists, they would be hissed out of society, as quacks, harlequins, and impostors. And yet, it is most natural, that the young and unpractised should conclude, that there must surely be some wonderful reality, where so much of the laudatory and boastful herald in the performance. And such, we suppose, are the subjects designed to be directly operated on by such strategy. We will not say of the whole concern, as is said in a respectable periodical, from another nation, that it is a “knave’s trap to catch fools;” but, we may safely, and truthfully say, that, after its recruiting sergeants have drummed and marched through the town, to raise patronage, a wonderful excitement is manifest among the inferior elements of society: boys rush along, in crowds, after the great wonder; servant maids, collected in groups, on the street corners, raise their hands in amazement; old women peer over their spectacles, astonished; cooks leave the supper burning, to gaze on the dazzling display; while men of intelligence and religion exclaim, in sadness, “When will men become rational? When will they cease to be governed by gross sensualism?” This public demonstration raises

the fever of desire, and impatience, on the part of the young and unthinking, to see all that such a pageant promises, to a pitch of unrestrainable intensity. Children steal away from their parents; servants, breaking over all restraints and prohibitions, crowd to the focus of attraction; clothing is sold, or pawned, to raise the amount necessary to procure a ticket; or money is borrowed, or stolen, for the important object. Such as fail to procure a ticket, collect about the entrance of the pavilion, in motley, clamorous crowds, through which ladies and gentlemen (?) attending the circus, have to force a passage.

We, however, now suppose the case of a novice, who, having paid his footing, enters the pavilion, procures an eligible seat in the mongrel throng, and awaits the opening of the performances, with impatience and expectations equally high. At length, the "sounding brass, and tinkling cymbal," begin to discourse "tempestuous music," but this he had heard on the street, and it sounded better then, than now, for, not being in such close contact with the listener, it did not so stun and pierce the ear. Then comes the "grand entree," that is, the company ride into the arena; but, as he had seen the noble horses, and the grotesquely attired riders, parading the street, this is not now new, except, that they may enter in a different order.

But, now the grand performance fairly opens; one man affects the Indian Warrior, and rides, and acts, as no sensible Indian ever did; another gallops round the ring, with a boy on his shoulders; one rides two horses at once, that is, standing with one foot on each; another performs "terrific leaps," in which, however, many

other animals greatly excel him, and the kangaroo is incomparably superior to him. A female now appears, in such a costume as, on the street, would ensure her a retinue of boys and negroes, if not a hail storm of rotten eggs, and would shut her out from all circles of respectable society. Mounted on her steed, standing on one foot, with the other thrown abroad, at a not very acute angle, and attired most favorably for personal exhibition, no marvel, if her person, and posturing, attract more attention, and excite more interest, than any thing else connected with her “wonderful act of horsemanship.” Another important and indispensable appendage to the circus, or rather, constituent of it, is a *Zany*, a professional *fool*, styled the *clown*. This idea was probably borrowed from the usage of ancient kings, of barbarous, or half-civilized countries, who, knowing that the ignorance of their times would not appreciate, or relish things intellectual, as an agreeable entertainment for their courtiers, provided themselves with a court fool, to produce such entertainment as suited the taste and intelligence of protegees and nobles, who could neither read nor write, but who loved to laugh over their dinners and their cups. That important personage was fantastically clothed—not unlike the performer of a circus—wore an odd cap, with a red stripe at top, which was his fool’s crown ; and, for a sceptre, he bore in his hand a *bawble*, (*marotte*,) which was a short stick, with a head carved on the end, and a small dry bladder attached, containing peas, or gravel, to rattle. The “king’s fool” was, usually, the most witty man to be found ; but, affecting the dress and manners of a simpleton, his flashes of rude wit shone the more

vividly. Such an office could not, of course, survive a period of general ignorance ; but, by a strange *metapsychosis*, the spirit of the old “ *king’s fool* ” seems to have revived, to animate the body of the new *Zany*, but with a wit less pungent and refined, to suit the taste of the new sphere in which it has now to revolve. It has been said, with seeming aptness, that a difference between the former, and the present race of professional fools is, that, with the former, the *fool* was affected, the wit real ; and, in the present, the *wit* affected, the clown natural. Indeed, the former, availing themselves of “ *fool’s license*,” often reproved the vice, or folly, of the great, quaintly, to be sure, but with good effect. Bishop Hall tells of a nobleman, who gave to his fool a staff, bidding him keep it until he met a greater fool than himself. The nobleman was taken with an illness, unto death, when the following dialogue occurred :—

NOBLEMAN. “ I am about to leave you.”

FOOL. “ And whither are you going ? ”

N. “ To another world.”

F. “ When will you return ? ”

N. “ *Never.* ”

F. “ What provision have you made for your entertainment there ? ”

N. (With a deep sigh) “ None at all.”

F. “ What ? None at all ! Then take my *staff*, for I am not guilty of any such folly as this.”

Compared with this character, how poor an animal is a modern clown ? He enters the ring riding backwards, perhaps, holding to the tail of his horse ; affects to be drunk, and falls ; and when one attempts to help

him on again, he lies heavy and helpless as a log, until his friend, by hard exertion, gets him partly up, when, suddenly, he makes a “terrific leap,” “clears three horses,” and hides himself beneath their bodies; or, peeping out through their legs, smartly tells his friend, “You can’t come it;” and when asked, if he will have another dram, he most wittily replies, “I wont have nothing else.” And yet this personage, whose office is to excite mirth by ludicrous acts, and by retailing stale jests, and stolen flat-boatisms, for original wit, is the chief attraction of the circus; unless, indeed, precedence be given to the highflier *vaultress*, or to the negro dancers.

Of late, we have noticed another item of attraction, in circus bills, under the imposing title of “classic groupings,” the exact import of which we do not fully comprehend. But the idea of going to the circus for any classic information—beyond such as may have been learned from a translation of Ovid—is a burlesque on whatever has been venerated, or esteemed, under that name. Possibly, however, the “classic groupings” may bear some affinity to the groupings of the “Model Artistes.” The *beastly*, in man, is making a mighty effort for the ascendancy, and is dragging its votaries down below all that is not purely animal. The circus is very near perfection, in this regard; but, *Model Artistry*, which seeks filthy lucre, by a shockingly immodest exposure of the bodies of men and women, in their natural state—or, at least, *appearance*—before a crowd of promiscuous spectators, descends below the mere animal; and, if the circus really should superadd this consummating glory to its other qualities, it may

soon claim to be the supreme court of sensuality; and we shall then hope, as indeed, we do now, that the sense of morality, modesty, and common decency in community, will soon strike the abomination from existence.

The *Model Artiste* adventure is a last-begotten moral monster of French atheistic libertinism—offspring of the same spirit that favored governmental reform—peaceful revolution; hoping, thereby, to exterminate religion, destroy morality, and set up, on the ruins, the reign of infidelity, and universal prostitution; but which was ready to labor madly to turn its tranquil waters to blood, when there was seen a blossoming for holier fruit. The universal condemnation and contempt poured upon this spume of atheism, by all decent portions of American society, is proof, that there are some heights and depths of licentiousness for which the people of this country are not yet ready.

But, if the “groupings” have no resemblance to the Model Artists, still we may regard these remarks as merely episodal, and return for the formality of a final leave taking of our friends of the circus. We have not enumerated half the evils and mischiefs of the circus, nor shall we now attempt it; our charcoal sketch is not over drawn, but deficient both in outline and coloring; but we may most safely say, that it has not a phase, or feature, but is positively bad, while not one compensating element of utility appears, for the bodies or souls, the minds or manners of its votaries. It is the enemy of mental improvement and moral purity, and tends to destroy health, waste

time, and squander money. To suppose, that men of cultivated reason, would attend it, is to suppose they would resign that high character, for a consideration of much less value than *Esau's pottage*. And could we believe, that truly religious men may habitually attend, and love its pleasures without a betrayal of the cause of Christ, it were easy to suppose that there was little cause for the suicide of Judas.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AMUSEMENTS—GAMES.

Gambling not treated, but games for amusement—CARDS—playing for amusement, forms the habit and love of it, and leads to gambling—instances—Case of Lock—of Dodd—Romaine—Remarks of Bennett—Even playing for amusement injures the confidence of business men, or young men—instance—Billiards, dice, &c., in the like category with cards.

AMUSEMENTS—GAMES.—There is another class of amusements, the prevalence and tendencies of which, render it proper, that we should inquire into the subject.

We speak not, now, directly, of *gambling*, for this is a clear immorality; but, merely of gaming, as an “amusement that cannot be taken in the name of the Lord Jesus.” That gambling is immoral, is sufficiently manifest, from the consideration, that, by engaging in it, you attempt to obtain that which is not your own, without rendering any consideration of value for it—which is fraudulent; and, at the same time, you put that in jeopardy, which you have no moral right to dispose of, for any but a lawful and useful purpose. Indeed, it would seem superfluous, to prove the immorality of that which is so, in the eye even of human law. But, there

are practices, about the morality of which, there is not the same unanimity of opinion, as obtains with regard to the grosser forms of gambling, which it may be proper to notice in the present connection. The first we notice, is,

CARDS.—These are employed, not only as instruments in numerous forms of *gambling*, but also as a source of amusement. They are said to have been invented some five hundred years ago, for the purpose of amusing a French Monarch,* while in a state of mental derangement; and, though the truth of this history of the origin of cards is questioned, we are half inclined to credit it, because of its appropriateness; for, certainly, the shuffling, dealing out, and poring over, bits of spotted paste-board, by the hour, with the intensest interest, seems an employment fitter for a demented king, than for a rational man, or a sane Christian.

Gambling with cards is, in itself, a heinous sin, and is prolific of almost every other vice, particularly fraud and dissipation. But very many who scorn the character of the professional gambler, yet feel fully authorized to indulge, habitually, and freely, in playing at cards for *amusement*. Playing for amusement is, to gambling, very much the same that habitual tippling is to drunkenness: the one leads to the other as directly, as the road to the city, or the river to the sea. No man becomes a gambler by one step, nor of original intention, no more than he does a drunkard by one

* Charles VI, King of France.

potation, and from fixed purpose. It is by toying with the harmless and beautiful young adder, until his poison fangs are grown, that men become mortally but unconsciously bitten; for they are unaware that the snakelet's pretty tooth has secreted the poison of death, until the killing infection has mingled with all their blood. Probably, every hated gambler, now shunned, as odious, by sinners of common dye, commenced his career by playing for amusement. Now, the amusement sought is but another name for excitement, and the play soon grows uninteresting without something to spring excitement. Accordingly, those who play for amusement, very commonly put up a very small stake, not for its own sake, but to give interest to the game. But, after a while, the dime, or half dime, is found not to afford the required interest, and the stake is increased. A little wine or brandy is found to give still additional interest to the play, and, gradually, the interest deepens with each increase of bet, and every potation from the bar; the day—the night passes, unheeded, away, and still the players are at the table; interest has risen to excitement, and excitement has become almost maddening; the bets have grown from dimes to dollars, from dollars to tens, from tens to hundreds; and, in instances, but too numerous, it has happened, that the sober, respectable citizen, who sat down to a game of cards, to amuse away an idle hour, has risen from his *innocent* amusement, before the morrow's sun had come up, *drunk, bankrupt, and ruined*. We have, to be sure, no personal experience, and but limited observation in matters of this kind, having,

very rarely, been in the way of witnessing, even *amusements* of that sort, except in travelling; yet we have seen enough to satisfy us, that the pernicious tendencies of playing for recreation can hardly be painted in shades untruthfully dark. On a recent occasion, when a noted gambler was spoken of, as distinguished in his profession, for skill, fraud, and success, a gentleman present, claiming to be respectable, and very moral, asserted, that *he* had taken that young man, when he knew not one card from another, and had taught him to play for amusement only, for he, himself, never gambled, he said, and that, in a very few years, he became one of the most notorious *blacklegs* in the country. And, though this moral man had started that youth in the way of dishonesty, disgrace, and, perhaps, eternal destruction, it seemed not at all to enter his mind, that he had, by the act, incurred a fearful responsibility. He taught him to play and cheat, for the innocent purpose of murdering precious hours; but the youth, having learned his trade, applied his learning to its natural, dishonest, and unholy uses. On one occasion, we saw four men, of high standing in society, seat themselves at the card table, not to gamble—for they all professed to scorn the character of the gambler—but merely to enliven the dull hours on a tedious voyage. It was Saturday evening: after playing a few games, they agreed to bet a half dime to give a little interest, and to make it convenient to count the game. Soon spirits were called in; now a dime was the bet—more spirits—twenty-five cents was the bet; it grew late, they talked loud, swore much, doubled the bet—drank

more deeply—doubled again, and so on, until Sunday morning, when the two more sober were found hardly enough so to assist the drunker two to bed. And all this was playing for amusement. How rational, how Christian like!

On another occasion, we saw a young man who had been religiously educated, enticed into the “innocent amusement,” by vile blacklegs, who “never gambled,” as they said, but only wished to pass off the time agreeably. When he professed, and truly, to know very little about playing, they were equally ignorant. Between the game and the *bar*, the excitement soon got up, and was kept up, and increased, until that young man was taken from the table beastly drunk, and robbed of every dollar. The next morning he found himself disgraced, scorned, and mocked, by his robbers, hundreds of miles from home, friendless and pennyless. Such are the legitimate fruits of the innocent employment of playing cards for amusement.

But the employment seems as little calculated to improve the mind, as to promote piety or morality.

The great Mr. Locke was invited to spend a day in company with Lord Shaftsbury, Lord Halifax, and the Duke of Buckingham, and, in the society and conversation of such men, he anticipated a rich intellectual feast. But great was his disappointment when, soon after the introduction, those distinguished noblemen, instead of engaging in profitable conversation with the philosopher, sat down to a game of cards. Locke looked on for a while, and then, taking out a memorandum book, fell to writing most diligently. After he had been thus employed for some time, one of the gentlemen observed

the fact, and inquired his object. "Having waited with patience," said Locke, "for the honor of being in company with the greatest geniuses of the age, I am endeavoring to profit by my present position, and am carefully writing down the conversation of your lordships, and think I have got it quite accurately for the last hour." The rebuke was felt to be just, and the cards were instantly thrown aside.

"I think it very wonderful," says Addison, "to see persons of the best sense passing away a dozen hours together in shuffling and dividing a pack of cards, with no other conversation but what is made up of a few game phrases, and no other ideas but those of black or red spots ranged together in different figures. Would not a man laugh to hear any one of these species complaining that life is short?"

How can such "diversions be taken in the name of the Lord Jesus?"

The celebrated Mr. Dodd was once invited to join in playing a game of cards. He seemed to assent, but instantly arose and took off his hat. He was asked what he was going to do. He replied, "To ask a blessing on our game." "But we never ask a blessing on these occasions," was the reply. "Then," rejoined Dodd, "I cannot join you, for I dare engage in nothing on which I cannot ask God's blessing."

A lady, after hearing a searching sermon from Mr Romaine, told him she could submit to all the claims of the gospel, as laid down by him, save in one thing—she could not give up the amusement of cards. "You think you could not be happy without them?" said he. "I *know* I could not," she replied. "Then, madam

they are your God, and they must save you, or you must be lost."

We add the excellent remarks following, from Mr. Bennett:—

"Little habits insensibly beget a passion for them; and, a passion for cards, murders time, money, talents, understanding, every thing that is rational in our nature, and every thing that is divine.

"If experience did not convince us of the fact, one should never have imagined that a *reasonable* creature would ever have been able to consume hours, days, weeks, months, and years, in counting over the black and red spots upon paper, and childishly to quarrel about their success—a creature who has an understanding that is capable of improvement to an infinite degree—a creature living in a world where knowledge is immense, and every flower or shrub a subject of astonishment—who has a temper that requires continual watchfulness; a soul that needs unremitting cultivation; perhaps children, that call for incessant instruction; amidst objects of distress, for which heaven begs each superfluous penny; and in a body that may, any moment, drop into the grave!

"I will advert no longer to the moral consequences. A woman, who has a wish only to please, should not be addicted to this practice. It is very apt to ruffle the temper, and discompose the features; and a sour or angry look, is more destructive to female charms, than a high scrofulous flush, or the indelible scars of the small pox.

"It is said, in favor of cards, that they prevent scandal, and are a substitute to many for the want of conversation. This conveys a severe stigma, both on our hearts and understanding. It supposes that we have few stores of entertainment *within* ourselves, and that the only way to avoid a *greater* crime is to fall into a *less*. Our moments, I fear, will not bear the scrutiny of conscience or reason, much less of the great day, if we cannot contrive to spend them in an innocent and useful manner, without the low resource of either scandal or play!

“ The *defender* of cards, however, will say nothing of gaming. No fortune, they know, is equal to its extravagant demands. An unlucky throw, loses thousands in a moment. It has reduced the most opulent families to indigence; it has led some to forgery and an ignominious death; others, whose pride would not brook the degradation, to the fatal act of suicide; at best, it has plunged into poverty and distress many heirs of honorable and illustrious houses, who were born, in all appearance, to happier days. Your moderate card players, as they call themselves, have often wondered what could tempt people of fortune to such a dreadful and ruinous amusement, as that of gaming. I will venture to say, that this shocking practice is nothing more than the spirit of card playing carried to its *extreme*; that equal temptations would, probably, have led *them* to the very same imprudence; that they both, generally, originate in the same principle, (the want of something substantial to fill and exercise the mind,) and are only an artificial method of destroying that *ennui* and languor, which are the most insupportable feelings of human life; and that the care of *both* must equally spring from solid knowledge, and from solid virtue.

“ Though gaming, *at first*, arises from no worse a principle than a want of amusement, or of having something to call the passions into exercise, yet, in its consequences, it has a tendency to eradicate every religious and moral disposition, every social duty, every laudable and virtuous affection. It renders the mind *selfish* in the extreme, and callous to every touch of woe, in every shape; whilst it stops up the sluices of charity, it extinguishes the inclination for it; it is deaf to every call of friendship or prudence. There can be no such thing as an attentive parent, mother, wife, brother, sister, or a sympathizing heart, where this infernal rage has possession of the soul. Every thing else is swallowed up in the all-devouring vortex. A gamester would stake the last thousand on a throw, though a prison for her husband, rags for her children, or a gallows for her nearest friend, were the melancholy prospect!

“ If you disbelieve *this* reasoning, look into life. What effect has this passion gradually produced on women, who had *once* hearts full of tenderness and virtue, and were affected with every

appearance of distress; who had from *nature* every refinement of taste, and every elegance of manners, to captivate and charm.

“If it were not invidious, I could produce many *living* characters to support my assertions. They would make a dismal picture, and the motto would be, ‘Beware of beginning.’”

To teach a youth to play at all, is to throw him into the way of temptation; to form the habit, is to give power to that temptation; and to contract a passion for playing, is to become its victim. Armed with this dangerous acquirement, he plays for the love of it; he bets to give interest to the game, and increases the stake to keep up that interest. Or, if he would play without betting, yet others will not play with him without that auxilliary, and he bets to accommodate his fellows, or, it may be, to avoid being thought timid or parsimonious. As the result, in its mildest form, much time is wasted, money is squandered, health is injured by keeping irregular hours, moral principle is weakened, and moral habits corrupted by evil association. Another consequence which young men do not look to with proper care, is the loss of confidence in them as business doing men.

As an instance, and illustration of this, we will state a fact. Some years ago, there were, on a steamer bound for the city of C—, an old wholesale merchant, and a young retailer, going to purchase goods. The young man played much, but only bet small sums to give interest to the game. After reaching the city the young man called at the large establishment of the old merchant, with whom he was acquainted, to make purchases. The keen eye of the old dealer had marked his movements on the boat; and, though the young

man had letters to the house from respectable sources, he was informed, that it would not be convenient to sell him goods on time. No reason was assigned, and probably the young man never knew the cause of his defeat; but the old gentleman said, in our hearing, that he made it a rule never to credit a young man who would play, nor ever to put claims for collection into the hands of a card-playing attorney; "for," said he, "if they were on the way to the city, with my money in their pockets, a little extra excitement would lead them to stake it on a game, hoping, if they should even lose, to win it back before reaching here." Whether this would hold good, as a universal rule, is not the question for a young man to consider; it is enough that this habit casts a shade of suspicion on his integrity, in the minds of prudent, far seeing men, whose influence can do them much good or harm in business.

Again: when an expert player, who is not a gamester, gets into pecuniary embarrassment, the temptation is strong to attempt his extrication by a temporary resort to gaming. We could point to several instances in which men have thus acted and lost all. In one instance, the experimenter resolved to make the daring venture, and, if he could win enough to relieve his pressing embarrassments, he would there stop, and never throw another card. He played—he won the sum required; but he falsified his vow, played on, and, in two hours, was hopelessly bankrupt, and so remains to this hour, though the circumstances occurred years ago.

What is true of the evils of card-playing is, to a greater or less extent, true also of billiards, dice, and other games of chance and skill. They all promote

the habit of wasting precious time, tend to a disrelish for religious enjoyments, for mental improvements, and even for steady business habits ; promote dissipation—mental, at least, if not physical—afford temptation to trick and fraud, and open the way to worse forms of gaming. That all are equally pernicious, and so under whatever circumstances practised, is what we dare not assert ; but we may assert, safely, that the very general tendency is decidedly bad. And a Christian may only engage in such as he can “use in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

CHAPTER XXV.

AMUSEMENTS.—SPORTS.

HORSE RACING—Original manner of running horses—Greeks practised this sport—Did not make gain an object—This a leading object in modern times—Plea that horse racing improves the breed of horses fallacious—The sport is cruel—Tends to dissipation—Gambling a chief object—An unfit place for ladies and Christians—Attendance of Christians wrong—HUNTING, &c.—Rule by which we may judge of the innocence of these sports.

THE word “*Diversions*,” used in the General Rules to indicate the indulgencies prohibited, is a very comprehensive one, and signifies something—any thing—that turns away or calls off the mind from the chief subject of human concernment—the great purpose of mortal existence.

The class of amusements commonly called “sports,” falls clearly within this description, and therefore claims a passing notice, at least. Prominent among these is the popular sport of

HORSE RACING.—This is one of the primitive sports of men in a state of nature. When men have few sources of mental and rational entertainment, they naturally turn to such as are of the animal sort; and, as horses, in the fulness of young life, love to exercise their limbs, and for that purpose frequently run, singly

or together, playfully over the pastures, or through the woodlands, it required no great ingenuity, in even barbarous people, to conceive the idea of setting them upon a trial of speed against each other. And, indeed, one of the early forms of horse racing was that in which a number of trained horses were started upon the track, or *stradium*, without riders, to run for the goal as they chose, very much as a herd of wild horses run in the Western prairies in a grand stampede.

The Greeks practiced the horse race in various forms, and they may be regarded as the originators of the sports of the turf. Single horses ran against time; one man rode two horses in a race, that is, leaping alternately from one to the other; a number of horses ran against each other in the race, each bearing a rider to direct his course, and to urge him to his utmost speed; but each competitor, whether simple jockey, statesman, noble, or king, was required to be the rider of his own horse. They also practiced the chariot race, in which two, three, or four horses were driven abreast round the track, at a furious and dangerous speed. But in none of these forms of racing does it appear, that the sordid idea of making the sport a matter of gain, by gambling on the chances of success, on the part of the competing animals, was ever entertained. They contended for the prize of applause and fame, not for money.

And though several kings were passionately fond of racing, and engaged in it largely, we have never yet heard that King Hiero, or Gelon, won a fortune; or that Dionysius, or Philip of Macedon, lost an estate by betting on a horse or chariot race.

In modern times the matter is different, and now sportsmen keep extensive studs of running horses, which they take many hundreds of miles, from one race course to another, for the purpose of making it matter of gambling speculation.

The only plea we have heard, of the least plausibility for horse racing is, that it tends to improve the breed of horses, by stimulating the lovers of the turf to produce the fleetest animals; yet this argument is more specious than solid, for the very cultivation of those qualities, pre-eminently esteemed in turf horses, tends, in the same proportion, to deteriorate those more valuable properties required for the purposes of common and active usefulness, and daily service. So that horse racing only tends to improve the breed of racing horses. The practice *is* gambling, and therefore wrong. It tends to cruelty, aye, is cruelty itself. Fine animals are over-strained, in order to win a purse for their masters, not only to the point of distress and suffering, but, in innumerable cases, to their ruin. Many a fine animal has been so urged beyond his ability, as to become a sufferer for life, to gratify an unfeeling master. A few years since, the fruit of one day's running was, to leave three horses dead at the course, and to disable a fourth for life. There are laws in our country, for the punishment of cruelty to dumb animals, and this is proper. We very often hear of draymen, and others, being arrested, and punished by law, for the cruelty of over-loading their horses, and then beating them unmercifully because of their inability to draw a load to which their strength is not equal; but the gentlemanly gambler, who runs his horse to death, to replenish his prodigal

purse, is not looked on as a violater even of the laws of humanity.

It tends directly and strongly to dissipation. The company, the object, the circumstances of the place and occasion, render it impossible for one to attend, and enter into the spirit of the place, without being led from the path of sober propriety, or without being made a worse man by the contaminating contact.

It promotes gambling, generally. Gambling is the primary object, and gamblers, of all shades and colors, flock to a place where homage is paid to their common divinity. Hence, the race-course is thronged, with not only horse-racers, card-players, and gamblers of every type, but pick-pockets, and horse thieves regard themselves as invited guests. And it appears sufficiently absurd to see, on these occasions, the originators of the whole affair, raising a fierce hue and cry against some small gambler, farrow bank dealer, or pick-pocket, and laboring to arrest and punish those their own arrangements and virtual invitation had brought there, in prosecution of their calling.

Furthermore: as the business of the meeting is gambling, the congregation made up of gamblers and their patrons, it would be singular, if the professional horse-racer were not led into other forms of vice. And such a hypothesis well agrees with known facts. We never have known an instance, in which a professional *sportsman* in this line, who followed round, from course to course, for the ostensible purpose of running horses, has not also had other modes of gaming as a part of his object; and, indeed, as racing is regarded as a very respectable mode of gambling, it is under-

stood that, with many, the horse-race is but the more decent cloak thrown about the person of the real black-leg, for purposes of disguise. The race-course is, in truth, a grand exhibition of vice and crime, in their numerous manifestations. Gaming, sporting, drinking, fighting, stealing, passing spurious money, and nearly every vice is there rife. It is a “protracted meeting,” whose whole business, arrangements, associations, and operations, are exactly suited to promote the growth and development of vice, and to deteriorate the moral principles of society.

That men addicted to the vices specially fostered there, and prepared to enjoy that sort of society, should visit the race-course, and receive the baptism of its unholy spirit, is not at all astonishing; but, that *ladies* should seek enjoyment in such society, and in amusements so utterly unfeminine, is an astonishing evidence how pervertible is even the natural delicacy of the sex. But what there can be found at the race-course, in its society, its employments, in its spirit, to attract a *Christian* there, we cannot conceive. And professors of religion should know, that, in visiting that scene of vice as spectators, they lend their influence and support to the encouragement of the vices there fostered: they become deeply partakers of other men’s sins. They cannot go there in the name of the Lord Jesus. It is the ground of the enemy, and on it you are left to your own weakness, to contend against, or yield to, the mighty evil influences pervading there. Wherever the Christian can go in the name of the Lord, he can claim the all-sufficient assistance of the Divine grace and strength:

but of this protection he cannot avail himself when he presumptuously, and uncalled, thrusts himself on to the ground of the enemy.

One evidence of the true character of this amusement, may be seen in the fact, that when a horse-racer attempts to seek the salvation of his soul, his convictions, on account of this indulgence, are very painful ; and it is usually one of the last sacrifices he is able to offer up in coming to the foot of the cross.

The number of members, in evangelical Churches, who engage directly in horse-racing, is, we prusume, small ; but much larger is the proportion of such as encourage it by their presence. This should be pointedly rebuked, by those who have the care of such delinquents ; for, we know of no more effectual way to destroy vital piety in the soul, or the Church, than that of suffering the *little foxes* that spoil the tender grapes, to go at large unrestrained, unrebuked, and virtually encouraged, by pastoral and ecclesiastical silence. Against the grosser forms of vice, we enjoy a measure of security in their very grossness and want of respectability ; but the respectability and semi-moral character of those other amusements, invest them with a dangerous and seductive power, to guard effectually against the encroachments of which demands ten-fold more care and vigilance, than to protect us against temptations to scandalous immoralities.

HUNTING, &c.—There are, however, some other kinds of sporting, about the propriety of which we should find diversity of opinion, even among pious people. Among these may be named hunting, fowling,

fishing, &c. Many good men may be astonished to find themselves apparently in class with horse-racers ; our object, however, is not to condemn without cause, but rather to attempt the settlement of a disputed moral boundary. It is not necessarily wrong to engage in fishing, fowling, &c., nor is it necessarily wrong to run a horse. The first may be resorted to for subsistence, the latter may be necessary to save the life, or relieve the sufferings of a fellow mortal, to escape from a pursuing enemy, or to bear an important dispatch. But it can hardly be inferred, hence, that every thing connected with these, as *sports*, is right.

Look, for a moment, at the exciting chase ; so soon as the pack raise the cry, dogs, horses, and men, put forth every effort in pursuit of a fox or stag, provided for the occasion. For hours the chase is continued, over hill and dale, fence and field, at the peril of limb and life, each one resolved, if possible, to be foremost, and to be “ in at the death.” What is the object ? To see a harmless animal run nearly to death, and then to see it torn to pieces by a pack of dogs. The whole is a piece of refined cruelty, which meets an equal condemnation from reason, humanity, and religion. This, then, is wrong ; but, we are seeking the boundary line, between this and that which is right.

Man, in right of a Divine charter, (Gen. ix. 3.) holds permission to use animal food, and this comprehends the right of taking animal life ; yet, it does not authorize the taking of animal life without necessity, much less from a principle of wanton cruelty. The beasts of the forest and field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the water, are given to man “ for meat,” but not for sport.

Here is the indisputable authority for hunting, fowling, and fishing, to procure "meat;" but no shadow of grant to do this for the pleasure of inflicting suffering, or death, on beast, bird, or fish. Animals, hurtful and dangerous, may be rightfully destroyed; but, beyond this, our grant extends only to the taking life for food.

There is no principle more directly at war with the genius of the gospel, than that which inflicts torture, or death, on living animals, for the mere love of the act as an amusement. The tendency is decidedly bad, as operating to deaden the better sensibilities of our nature. When a pagan populace brought their feelings to delight in seeing wild beasts tear each other to pieces, in the arena of the amphitheatre, it was but a short and natural step, to become equally delighted, in seeing Christians torn to pieces by wild beasts as a charming sport. The Christian of refined sensibility, has an aversion to inflicting, or to witnessing, animal pain or death, when it is strictly necessary; and when it becomes his duty to inflict it, he will do so in the most speedy, and least painful manner possible. Remember, then, you have no right to take the life of any thing, as a matter of amusement or sport; and, in doing so, you cannot be held guiltless. This is, evidently, the true rule; and the ethics here briefly laid down, are such as will stand the scrutiny of reason and religion. By this plain rule, let each sport-loving Christian try his own conduct, and hear, and abide the verdict, of an instructed conscience.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BETTING.—LOTTERIES.—INSURANCE.

BETTING—The principle wrong—A legal offence, and morally wrong—*Betting on Elections*—Attended with worse effects than other forms of the vice—Tends to corruption—Indirect modes of betting—no better—LOTTERIES—Principle explained and shown to be immoral—essentially gambling—INSURANCE—Different in principle and object—Explained.

WHAT we have now to say, does not fall, strictly, into any of the classifications of which we have treated, but more nearly belongs to that of *gaming* than any other. They are, however, proper, as we judge, to be noticed in connection with the system of Christian and Methodist ethics, of which we have been treating.

And first: as an evil practice, not countenanced by Christianity, but opposed to it, we notice:—

BETTING.—It has been assumed, that betting, or staking a wager, on the result of an uncertainty, generally, is not gambling; because, in the common forms of gambling, the party making the bet has the playing of the game, upon the result of which, the winning or losing depends; and skill or fraud may have more to do in deciding the result, than mere chance, which is not true of the other case. This fact may be

granted, without admitting the conclusion ; for the arts and frauds employed—however they may aggravate the turpitude of the act—are *incidental*, and not *essential* to the nature of gambling ; they may exist, apart from gambling, and gambling may exist without them—except only in so far as gambling necessarily partakes of the nature of fraud. All that the reasoning above can show would be, that betting, on apparently even and wholly uncertain chances, is but a less fraudulent mode of gambling ; but still, as its aim is to get property, without giving value for it, and in the attempt property is put in jeopardy, which the party had no moral right to dispose of in that manner, it is of the very essence of gambling. In fact, it is a transgression of all good civil, or common law ; and, perhaps, there is not a well ordered civil government, where a wager, won by betting, can be collected by law, or where, if already paid, it cannot be recovered from the winner by legal proceeding. Herein, the *legal immorality* of betting is fairly recognized, and it will not be asserted, that gospel morality is less strict or stringent. The loser lost his money, by his own free act, in attempting to get that of his competitor ; but the law steps in for the protection of his family, creditors, or others, who have rights in the premises, and will not permit his act to prejudice their right, or, at any rate, to vitiate their claims. The man, therefore, who makes a bet, is a gambler in the eye of law and gospel.

BETTING ON THE RESULT OF ELECTIONS.—This is more frequently indulged in, probably, by the better sort of men, than any other kind of gambling of this

class; and it has strangely been regarded, by many, as less criminal, while, in truth, it is one of the very worst forms that the vice of gambling can assume; the worst, as an *act*, not a *habit*. The reasons are obvious: it possesses all the elements of gambling, generally; and, besides, is calculated to work a political corruption, deadly poisonous to the springs of pure patriotism. To illustrate this: a man bets, or offers to bet, which is as bad, five hundred dollars, that A. will be elected to a certain office for which he is a candidate. Here the *aim*, and perhaps, generally, the effect, is to influence men to vote for A., not upon the ground of merit, but by a show of strong confidence in his success. He knows that men, lacking principle, aim to be on the successful side; and, by staking money on the success of his candidate, he makes a show of strong confidence in that success. This real, or *affected* confidence—for it is as likely to be the latter, as the former—backed as it is, gives confidence in those who rely upon his judgment, and will be likely to influence their action, contrary to principle and duty. Furthermore, having staked his money on a contingency, it is now his interest, to the amount of five hundred dollars, to bring about the result, upon which so much personally depends as he is concerned; and personal gain, and selfish ends, naturally come to operate where only pure patriotism should influence him; and, to gain those ends, he will not be very scrupulous about the means to be employed; for *success*, and *self*, and not principle and love of country, give character and direction to his actions.

And should he subsequently become convinced, that he was deceived in the character of his candidate, and

that his election would be a curse to community, yet, both his pride of opinion, and his pecuniary interests, impel him on, against the convictions of his understanding, and the promptings of his conscience. It is, then, gambling of the worst type, in which men gamble off patriotism, duty, and conscience, corrupt their own principles, and avail themselves of the corruption of others, to make a personal gain of it to themselves, at the expense of their country's weal and honor.

And the many artifices by which betting on elections is evaded in *form*, but practiced in *fact*, are little better, if any, than the direct, undisguised act. A man—for example—will not bet, directly, but he will sell you a suit of clothes, worth fifty dollars, for one hundred, to be paid when A. is elected to a particular office. This may not be betting, *legally*, but *morally* it is, and none the more honorable for wearing a mask. If A. is elected, he wins fifty dollars, for you pay him that amount more than the value of the articles bought; and, if A. is not elected, you never pay your note, and so win from him property worth fifty dollars. And though he should take your note only for the value of the goods bought, payable as above, the morality of the case is the same; for he agrees to jeopard his property wrongfully on a contingency, and you agree to take it wrongfully without giving value; only, in this case, the hazard is all on one side, and it is, therefore, gambling upon an unequal bet. With all such contemptible trickery and fraud, Christians should blush to have any concern whatever. They are not patriots who do it; and, if they can be Christians, we know not on what principle.

LOTTERIES AND INSURANCE.—We name these two together, not for the purpose of uniting them, or of placing them on a ground of more equality, but, having been unlawfully wedded, we desire to divorce them, as being “unequally yoked together.” The assumption that these are morally equal, in grade and character, has been productive of two errors, quite opposite to each other. In the one case, the reasoning is this: *Lotteries* and *Insurance* are of the same nature; but lotteries are wrong, therefore *insurances must be wrong* also: in the other it is—insurances and lotteries are based on the same principle of chance, but insurance is right and proper; therefore, *lotteries must be right also*. It happens, in this instance, as generally in sophistries, that the error lies in the premises. If the premise were true—the moral parity of the two things—then the conclusion would be correct, one way or the other; but such is not the truth, and hence both conclusions are wrong. We will try to simplify this subject, for the benefit of those who have not made it their study, and who may have embarrassments originating from this source.

There is something in the nature of hazard, or risk, connected with each, and this is almost the only property possessed by them in common; for, in all their distinctive qualities, they are widely different. To make this difference plain, we will state enough of the operation of each to explain their principles.

Suppose it the intention to raise, say, twenty-five thousand dollars, by lottery; the process would be—*in principle*—the following, varying, of course, in detail: Five thousand tickets are issued, and sold at ten dollars

each, making fifty thousand dollars; but, to clear the sum desired, one half only of the amount, raised by the sale of tickets, is expended in the payment of prizes, leaving the other half as the gain by the operation. The prizes are temptingly blazoned out, perhaps, on something like the following scale: "Capital prize of \$10,000; one prize of \$5,000; one of \$2,000; one of \$1,000; twenty of \$100; one hundred of \$20, and three hundred of \$10." In all \$25,000 paid, or promised in prizes, out of \$50,000 raised from tickets; the other half *blanks*, being the gain on the operation. Here the lottery manager takes a large sum from community, for which he gives back nothing of value. He has employed no capital, no useful art, no professional skill, or science, but has drawn from the community \$50,000, by the legerdemain of inducing them to believe that they will be largely gainers by receiving back one half of their own money paid out. This he is enabled to effect by presenting apparent chances of getting back, individually, more than was paid out for tickets. Aggregately, this cannot be, because the customers must, in the aggregate, lose one half the entire sum paid in, for that proportion goes into the manager's coffer, to remain. No man would buy *all* the tickets, because he knows that, on the whole, a loss of \$25,000 must result to him; yet many will buy one, or ten, in the unreasonable hope of making a gain by it. But what are the chances of such gain? If you hold a ticket, and there should be no special fraud, or failure, on the part of the management, then, as there are but four prizes for which one would care to gamble in this way, the chances are 4,996 to four, against your

getting one of these; and twelve to one against your getting any thing at all—even the cost of your ticket. Suppose yourself an inhabitant of a town containing 5,000 souls: to know that *one*, or even *four*, of the inhabitants should die, within a year, would not sensibly affect your fears, because the chances of escape are so very great, that you scarcely feel that you are even *liable* to the calamity—much less in great *danger*—of being the victim. And yet your ground of alarm, in that case, is equal to your ground of hope in the other. In ordinary gaming, the gambler stakes his money equally against yours; but the lottery gambler stakes your own money against you, and not a farthing of his own; and you know before that, while the ticket buyers put up all the money, they must, of necessity, lose—aggregately—one half the amount thus paid, when the game is played out, and that the manager of this safe farrow bank employs nothing, and risks nothing, but must, by the operation, get \$25,000, for which he gives and promises nothing. The operation is this: Five thousand men bet, each ten dollars, making an aggregate stake of \$50,000, that they will, respectively, get, by the fortuitous turn of a certain wheel, some portion of *one half* of the sum thus paid in, the other half being the gain of the operator. Regard the ticket holders as a unit, or a corporation acting by one agent, and no man, or agent, could be found silly enough to embark in the speculation, or obtuse enough not to discern its fraudulent and immoral character. The manager proclaims: “A chance for great speculation; *twenty-five thousand dollars*, to be paid in prizes.” “Very good,” responds the agent, “I am your man;

give me fair terms, and I will take the whole, and so be sure of the \$25,000. What will you take for the entire lot?" "Ten dollars each, for 5,000 tickets, will secure the whole," answers the honest manager. "That is \$50,000, I believe," rejoins the agent. "Thank you for *nothing*, Mr. Manager; but I think it might be as well to keep my \$50,000, as to pay you *half* of it, for handing me back the *other half*."

After this simplifying exhibit of the matter, it can hardly be necessary to show, that the whole lottery system is gambling, more wrongful, unequal, and deceptive, than any of the common forms of this vice. In its original design it is fraudulent, and in contravention of the principles of common law, and common honesty, which forbid the taking of "something for nothing." Its effect, too, in exciting men to seek in this channel for unlawful gain, is most deleterious and immoral. Men have been stimulated to risk, and lose their all, and beggar their families, in this most deceptive mode of gambling. And even in the rare instances in which the gambler, in lottery stock, has won a prize, the winning alike as the losing, was in violation of good conscience, and has, in nearly every case, proved a curse, rather than a blessing to the winner.

The case of INSURANCE is very different. The object of the assured, is to protect himself against loss of property, for which he has honestly paid the value, by paying another to take the risk, or a part of it: in case of the lottery, the object is to gain property without giving value, and by means contrary to morality. But to explain the operation of insurance a little more fully: By a careful and extensive observing

of the statistics of morality, of losses by fire, and losses by the dangers of navigation, men have been able to calculate the proportion of loss, and, consequently, the amount of risk, with sufficient accuracy for practical purposes. Taking all the men of a nation, or all the buildings of a whole country, the aggregate number of deaths, or fires that occur yearly, may be ascertained, and from this, the average risk in each particular case. Now, suppose, for illustration, (and for the convenience of round numbers,) that one hundred men, have each a dwelling worth one thousand dollars; this is their all of real property, and they are naturally desirous to protect themselves from losses, by the burning of their property. How can they gain that protection in a just and proper way? The estimated average risk of loss by fire, on such property so situated, is, say, *one per cent.*; that is, the equal probability is, that one dollar in a hundred may be lost by fire, or one house of the hundred may burn down in each year. Upon the *mutual* plan—which is the only strictly equitable one—those men form themselves into an association, for mutual succor and protection, and, each man consents to an annual assessment on his property, of *one per cent.*, or ten dollars a year on each man's building. This will raise a fund of \$1000 to meet losses by fire; and if, during the year, the house of one of the company should be burned down, he has the loss made up to him, except his own assessment of ten dollars. Should no fire occur, the first year, the fund will be doubled the next year, and so on; and then, on the occurrence of a larger loss, the accumulated means may be equal to the loss. Should the agreement of

mutual protection be for a specified term, and, at the expiration of that term, a surplus should be found on hand, it is divided among the contributors. But the families of these men are dependent on *their* labor for subsistence ; and, in case of the death of one, his family will be left destitute. Wishing to provide against this result, they embrace life insurance, in their plan of mutual protection, on the same general principle. Suppose, then, the estimated probabilities of a man's death within a year, be equal to one and a half per cent. ; then, if he would secure to his family \$1000, in the event of his death, he pays in fifteen dollars a year, and the operation is as in the other case. But, suppose no such mutual association is formed, or accessible, then the next resort is, to stock companies, organized for the same purpose. In that case, stock is taken and paid in, forming a fund to cover losses. But as with such companies, the prime object is gain, or profit, they will make their estimates, and fix their rates of premium, with a view, not merely to cover losses, as in the cases of mutual insurance, but to receive a profit on the capital invested ; and the surplus goes to the stock owners, and not to those insured, as in the other case.

The mutual plan is much to be preferred, as having connected only the simple object of mutual protection. But, however modified in detail, the real principle of insurance is the same, and is not only moral, but highly expedient. It is in the mutual, as if one friend should agree with another, " If your house burn, I will aid you to rebuild, provided, you will aid me in case such a calamity overtakes me ; and, if I die first, you shall

give aid in supporting my family, and I will do the same for yours, should you die first." In other modes of insurance, it takes on more of a business form, and the stock company says to the customer, "We will repair, or repay any loss you may sustain, provided, you will pay us a sum equal to the risk, trouble, and investment." In insurance, the design is to give value—averagely estimated—for the protection afforded; in lotteries, it is the reverse.

CHAPTER XXVII

AMUSEMENTS.—SINGING.—READING.

Poetry and song the language of feeling—Common to all states of society—Specially suited to devotion—Two extremes—Errors and evils in common musical education—A class of devotional songs of questionable propriety—READING—What is necessary to its profitting—Political papers—their bitterness—Fashionable Periodicals—Books of infidel tendency—varied to suit different tastes—Works of fiction even more hurtful—chiefly calculated to excite passions and corrupt the heart—Destroys a taste for solid reading Testimony against—Prejudicial to domestic happiness—should be discouraged by pulpit and press.

“THE SINGING THOSE SONGS WHICH DO NOT TEND TO THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF GOD.”

SINGING.—Poetry is the language of imagination and feeling, and singing is the natural vocal expression of the feelings, as embodied in the language of poetry.

As poetry, in some form—crude or more refined—is found among the early productions of all nations, and constitutes a prominent element of the unperfected literature of people, in the earlier stages of civilization; so singing, which gives effective utterance to the sentiments of poetry, seems to have been in use coevally with poetry itself. The language of passion, of deep feeling, of devotion, has been uttered in song, in all ages and countries of which history affords us any knowledge. It was conspicuous in the rites and orgies of the pagan

divinities, and, from the first institution of congregational worship, constituted an important part of public and social devotion. It is a most effective means of impressing the mind, directing the passions, and influencing the will ; and has, therefore, ever been employed by the religious, to quicken devotional feeling ; by the patriot, to strengthen love of country ; by the warrior, to kindle the martial fire in the soldier's bosom ; by the lover, to soften the heart of his mistress ; by the politician, to advance the cause of his party ; by the demagogue, to secure the object of his ambition ; by the bereaved and afflicted, to express and alleviate their sorrow ; and, by the happy, to give utterance and augmentation to their joy. It is a universal language, the language of feeling, whose very tones render it intelligible throughout the earth. The bold note of victory ; the merry song of gladness ; the devotional breathing of the holy anthem ; the low plaint of love ; the wail of the funeral dirge ; these are understood alike every where.

An instrumentality so potent, which is capable of such mighty control over the human mind and passions, which can achieve so much of good or evil, should be rightly directed, that so it may be rendered, as was the design of the Creator, a source of blessing, and a means of good to our race. And this is the object of the rule we now have under consideration.

Singing appears to have been specially designed to promote and cherish devotional feelings, and is peculiarly suited to this end ; yet it is not restricted to that object. The question here presented is, what

is prohibited, and what permitted, by the language of the rule.

Two extremes are found in this, as on most other subjects. On the one hand, every thing is condemned that is not properly devotional, or religious singing; while, on the other, any sentiment or passion seems to be regarded as innocent, so that it be but embodied in poetic form, and expressed by singing. There is, certainly, a well defined difference between prose and poetry, and between speaking and singing; but that there is a *moral* difference between a sentiment spoken in prose, and the same sentiment, when sung in poetry, appears to us preposterous. And, yet, such a distinction is practically assumed and acted out, and the effect is error, confusion, and mischief. The confounding of moral distinctions which really exist, and the recognizing of such as do not really exist, must ever be productive of confusion and error.

There are persons who have no scruples in reading, or in expressing, in conversation, thoughts, sentiments, or feelings, whose moral tendency may well be questioned; but those same persons would feel quite guilty, were they to utter the same thing in singing. They happened, in some incidental way, to conceive of "song-singing" as a moral obliquity of grave magnitude; and, while foolish talking, jesting, and levity of language, are freely indulged in, their moral sensibilities are greatly shocked to hear another person *sing* what they themselves have *spoken* with much relish.

Aye, there are those who will talk nonsense, or worse, all day, to the detriment or destruction of every

religious feeling ; but denounce, as heinous, the singing of a sensible, moral, or patriotic song ; and even a temperance song disturbs the equanimity of their pious nerves. This seems inconsistent, if not foolish. But the opposite extreme, if not more foolish and weak, is more wicked and corrupting in tendency. Those, on that extreme, seem to think it proper to sing a thousand things which it would be utterly improper to express in colloquial intercourse. Unfortunately, this error is found to possess the hearts of many of our cultivated young females ; and, indeed, it is grounded into their susceptible young minds, almost with their first "music lessons" at boarding school. The truth is, there is a faultiness prevalent in this department of education, which demands the application of a corrective. Our daughters must be taught music, which is very well, if properly done ; but, in order to such teaching, they are, very generally, put under the instruction of some foreigner, or other person, employed for his musical attainments alone, without any regard to moral habits, or religious principles. Not a few of these are infidel in sentiment, and in morals dissolute ; and more likely, therefore, to corrupt, than to correct the moral tastes of those committed to their care. Accordingly, our young ladies "practice" on any thing that comes to hand, not absolutely obscene ; and words are put into their lips connected with their music lessons, from the use of which their native modesty, at first, instinctively shrinks back ; but it is only following the universal current, and to object would but be looked on as prudish affectation ; and, finally, they become familiarized with

what, at first, produced revulsion, and can sing with apparent gusto, the whole catalogue of fashionable songs.

When pupilage has ended, and those young ladies are called on to perform on the piano, or guitar, or harp, for the entertainment of social circles, their performances must fall within the scope of their musical education, and they can give only the fashionable airs, and words of levity, which they have been taught at school.

It has frequently happened, that a pious parent who has paid out hundreds for the music lessons of his daughter, and has procured her a costly instrument, when she—a member of the Church—has returned home, and he has asked her to perform some favorite piece, religious, or at least moral, in its character, she has replied by a significant smile, which seemed a compound of pity for his ignorance, and good natured ridicule of his old-fashioned taste and want of refinement. If asked to sing those pious songs which used to flow from her lips with so much warmth and delight, she declares that she can only sing in connection with her instrument; but, in that connection, she can sing only those romantic compositions, or amorous ditties she has been taught. And this attainment, which should be made the instrument of good, and enjoyment to its possessor and her friends, and especially her parents, is wholly perverted, and becomes, in but too many instances, worse than useless. Worse than useless we say, because, while it fails of the good ends to which it is applicable, it is rendered subservient to purposes of evil. Music, and, especially, when breathed in

heart-felt, innocent, or pious song, without or with an instrument, is calculated to soften the feelings, to sweeten the temper, to promote cheerfulness, and even to quicken devotion; but when a duly accomplished young lady can sing only “to her light guitar,” or as an accompaniment to the piano or harp, and this not in sensible or pious composition for her own edification, and that of her family, but only for display in fashionable assemblies, or to make an impression on some wealthy beau, and then in words of pretty nonsense, or equivocal *entendre*, and these screamed, or sighed, or whispered out in tones and cadences of most scientific and languishing affectation; when her parents are regarded as auditors too unimportant to call out her musical attainments; when her husband is made to understand, too late, that those attainments were not designed as a means of cheering and solace to him through life, but only to serve as the lure, by which he was to be brought within matrimonial toils—that the sweet seductive tones, so animated and charming in wooing time, are to be dumb in wedlock, and that the last uncheery note is to expire with the waning beam of the short honey-moon, it may well be inquired wherein is the profiting, the permanent benefits promised by the attainment.

Furthermore; the girl sent by pious parents to a *religious* school, under the care of a minister of the gospel, to learn all the nonsense and levity connected with a fashionable musical education, will naturally, and innocently—as a child—utter those words she is commanded to sing, while thumbing her instrument, though not without some modest hesitancy; but when, as a

young lady, she sings and plays, for some ardent, young admirer, her old and practiced words, which, from long use, have almost become meaningless with her, such as, "Am I not fondly thine own," "Come, rest in this bosom," or that execrable sentiment—as usually applied—"I but know that I *love* thee, *whatever thou art*," she fails not to perceive how effectively she has touched the chords of passion in the young man's heart; and this discovery brings back its reflex influence upon her own passions, which gives yet deeper emphasis, and touching pathos, to the tender passages of her performance. Thus, while she conquers, she is herself vanquished; while she disarms her antagonist, she has lost her own armor in the process; and, if she has fanned a volcano in the bosom of her admirer, she has but poured oil on the smouldering embers of passion in her own. In all this there is nothing to improve the mind, or to make the heart better; but the strong, natural tendency, is in the opposite direction. And to say that such musical wooings sometimes result in happy matrimonial alliances, is no more than saying, that the frail bark is sometimes fortuitously driven into a safe harbor, by the very tempest which imperilled and threatened to destroy it. Reason, prudence, virtue, had about as much to do in producing the first result, as nautical skill, or good seamanship, had to do with the other.

To us, it does appear, that this is a point of danger that has not been well guarded by religious parents and teachers. In no part of a young lady's education is it easier—if so easy—unsuspectedly, to mislead in the direction of danger, and yet no other is so inse-

surely guarded. Few men would place a daughter under the educational care of a known infidel, or a libertine; and yet, it is to be feared, that the proportion of such men, in the department of musical instruction, is alarmingly large.

It may be doubted, whether all the songs and singing, claiming to be devotional, really tends to the knowledge and love of God. The hymns contained in our hymn books, and which we use in congregational worship, generally, are sensible, and full of sound and instructive divinity, to be sure; but there have crept in, among us, many songs called "spiritual," which have in them little of poetry, good sense, or doctrine; some of them consisting, almost wholly, of a continuous repetition of a few unmeaning sentences, and these sung to tunes of light and mirthful character—tunes, in many instances, borrowed from words profane, light, or loose, associating in the mind their origin, and former connection. Of such, we say, it *may* be gravely doubted, whether they "tend to the knowledge and love of God." That such songs may tend to enliven and animate, is not questioned; but these effects, in the total absence of Christian doctrine, instruction, or devotion, can have no tendency to promote the knowledge, or love of God. They may stir the blood, and produce a momentary glow of feeling; but do they leave behind any thing of the love, or knowledge of God, as the result of their influence? We fear not. Since, then, we have abundance of hymns, and spiritual songs, which, if rightly employed, do tend to the desirable ends specified in the rule, let us employ them in glorifying God, and avoid those whose tendency is evil, or even doubtful.

“READING THOSE BOOKS WHICH DO NOT TEND TO THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF GOD.”

Reading is a great source of knowledge, of which it is the duty of all, who have it in their power, to avail themselves. But this invaluable instrument of knowledge and virtue is, by multitudes, perverted, and made the means of evil, and source of mischief. Many there are, who, though they read much, gain no real wisdom by their reading, and are rendered less virtuous, useful, and happy, than they would have been had they never read at all.

To read profitably, it is necessary, not only to select good books, and other reading matter—the thing specially enjoined in this rule—but also to read carefully, studiously, digestively. There are those who read almost incessantly, yet never master the subjects upon which they read. A few books, judiciously selected, and thoroughly studied, will impart more substantial knowledge, than the reading of whole libraries in a careless and hurried manner. We have heard men boast of having read a thousand, or more, pages within a week, of historical, scientific, or argumentative matter; and the consequence was, that they had acquired less information than they would have obtained by carefully studying fifty pages of the same matter. Mental food, like physical, gives strength and nourishment only when taken in such manner as to be thoroughly digested; while, in the one case, as in the other, a mass of mere crudities received, but burdens and enervates, and tends more to injury than benefit.

Mr. Buck has judiciously said, “Much reading is no proof of much learning; fast readers are often desultory

ones. Hence the reason some know so *little*, is because they read so much. The *helluo librorum*, (literary glutton,) and the true scholar, are two very different characters."

The same author tells of a young man, who boasted of having gone entirely through Euclid's Elements in one afternoon; and, when asked if he had mastered all the demonstrations, and solved all the problems, in that short time, answered, "I suppose you mean the A's, and B's, and C's, and 1's, and 2's, and 3's, and the pictures of scratches and scrawls. No, no, I skipt all them. I only read Euclid himself, and *all* Euclid I did read, and in one piece of the afternoon." And many persons, who boast of their extensive reading, acquire thereby about the same knowledge of the subjects of which they read, that this young charlatan acquired of the science of geometry.

But the rule under consideration has special respect to the proper selection of books. This is of much importance, for no carefulness, or study, can bring good or profit out of a book calculated only to minister to the depravity of human nature. And, unfortunately, books of this character are fearfully abundant in this age and country. Nor is the evil confined to books alone, but a large proportion of the periodical literature of the day is found in the same general category. Even the political newspapers of our country are not free from the just imputation of immoral tendency. So very zealous are they in the advocacy of their respective parties, and leaders, and so bitter and vituperative in denouncing their political antagonists, that, agreeably to the strong representations of one

party, the men connected with the other, and especially its distinguished men, are held up before the public as enemies to their country, and destitute of every correct and honorable principle. Generally, those papers are utterly unfit to be put into the hands of our children ; for, if they are permitted to drink from fountains of so much bitterness, prejudice, and partiality, they will learn, from their very infancy, to execrate many of the best and wisest public men of the country, as knaves and traitors. Accordingly, even children, under such tuition, have been heard, abusively, to denounce Cass, Taylor, Fillmore, and Butler, with the acrimony of veteran demagogues. Of those men the country has been proud, and against no one of them have we ever heard ought, except as originating in political partyism ; and yet, children are taught, by the political papers they read, to entertain, towards such men, a malignity of feeling, which will, probably, accompany them through life. Following the lead of their respective political papers, neighbors, friends, fellow church members, and even members of the same family, have become cool, distant, and finally hostile to each other, and, in some instances, have remained enemies for life. The tendency of this evil is, to the destruction of confidence and harmony in the State, in the Church, and in the social circle.

It is certainly proper, that there should be vehicles for the communication of correct political information ; but when the press is prostituted to the end of party triumph, and personal preferment, by means reckless and dishonorable, the evil demands correction, and calls for practical rebuke, on the part of Christians, and all

who value public morals, and social harmony, above the advancement of demagogues, and the interests of partisan editors.

There is another class of periodicals, whose tendency is not the best; we mean the elegant, fashionable monthlies, and popular hebdomadals. The grand attractions of these, consist in trashy tales, preternaturally colored, small wit, conundrums, puzzles, "shocking accidents," "brutal murders," and the like. They contain but little useful information, and, in many cases, still less calculated to promote virtue or piety; and though some of them are, in a measure, free from the accusations here brought, the proportion is small of such as can, in their entire contents, be safely admitted to our family circles.

Of books of evil tendency, there are several classes, and many that it might be difficult to assign to any appropriate classification. First among these, we notice books of infidel tendency. These, again, are of different kinds, intended to suit various tastes, and different degrees of intelligence on the part of the readers.

If the reader is coarse, vulgar, superficial, and desirous to find a theory to protect his conscience in a course of licentiousness, the scathing irony, the unargumentative flippancy, the coarse ribaldry, and obscene jests of Payne, will be likely to suit his taste. But as this writer was utterly ignorant of the book he opposed, and employs no solid reasoning against the Bible, many persons, willing to be unbelievers, can yet not be satisfied to receive low wit, and vulgar jests, as sufficient to justify the rejection of a book received

as of divine origin, by the wisest and best of mankind. Such will be likely to find, in the subtleties of Hume, the historical guise of Gibbon, the philosophical works of Voltaire, or the elegant, but contradictory fictions of Volney, a temporary salvo for the upbraidings of a troublesome conscience. Many young men of fine promise, the pride and hope of their families, have been seduced from the principles of morality, and the practice of virtue, through the instrumentality of such books; and, especially, when presented and recommended by men, whom they have been taught to regard as their superiors in intelligence, as in experience. And hoary apostles of infidelity, have employed such works to mislead confiding youth into paths of danger and destruction. One of the successful lures employed to draw the unsuspecting into the meshes of infidelity, has been to represent the Christian revelation as the offspring of ignorance; and the religion of Christ, as suited only to weak, uncultivated, and superstitious minds; while infidelity is decked out in a stolen garb of philosophy, science, and reason. The men, and the books of which we have been speaking, persuade young men that to despise the holy truths, and moral restraints imposed by the Bible, is to declare their mental independence, and to take high rank with the great philosophers of the earth. And the depraved heart affords but too genial a soil, for the ready reception of such poisonous seed; and wrecked hopes, and ruined morals, are the unhallowed harvest produced. Where a direct assault on the principles of virtue is not likely to be successful, in the first instance, a resort is had to such strategy, and scientific disguises, as will most effectually

cover the real design ; and, as the subjects, or *victims*, become prepared for stronger meat, a portion of the disguise is thrown off, and books of ranker impiety are put into their hands, until, finally, they are fully graduated in the school of theoretical and practical ungodliness.

It has sometimes happened, that a too great eagerness to bring forward the pupil rapidly, has defeated its object. An instance of this kind came under our notice, a few years ago. A veteran destroyer of youth, having first put the introductory books into the hands of a young man, inclined to profligacy and dissipation, and thinking his pupil prepared for stronger doctrines, pronounced the immortality of the soul, and a future state, a miserable humbug. This disciple was shocked ; the thought of annihilation preyed terribly on his mind, conviction fastened on his conscience, and he rested not, until assured of an interest in the Son of David, whom he had been taught to despise as an imposter.

But, there is yet another class of books more dangerous, and mischievous in the aggregate, than those we have named, because more pleasing, plausible, and insinuating. We, of course, allude to what are called novels, romances, &c. These are usually very fascinating ; rendered so by a pleasing, or elegant style of composition ; by fictitious creations of daring exploits, wild adventure, graphic delineations, bloody conflicts, affairs of love, and whatever else is calculated to interest the feelings, and produce mental excitement.

That there are works of fiction, of innocent character, and even of useful tendency, is not to be denied : for,

excluding moral and historical productions of this class, most of the higher order of poetry, moral and instructive fables, allegories and metaphors, and even the excellent parables of the Holy Scriptures, partake of the quality of fiction. But though the prophets and poets of the Bible, and Christ himself, employed this description of composition, to illustrate and enforce sacred truth and Christian duty, it has, of late, been vilely prostituted to the worst of uses. A very large proportion of works of fiction, at the present day, are employed to excite the passions, and corrupt the heart. Novel writers frame their productions to suit the demand in the market; and well knowing, that the multitude read for excitement, and not for information, and that what addresses and excites the depraved passions, will be more readily purchased, and read, with a more greedy avidity, than that which addresses the understanding, and the moral sense, and requires thought and research, they accommodate their works to a vitiated state of popular taste, which taste those works, in turn, strongly tend still more deeply to corrupt. Such is the character of the novels of this age, generally, and such their evil tendency, that the friends of religion, of morality, of solid learning, and of domestic happiness, are alike bound, by the most sacred obligations of duty and interest, to use all honorable means for their banishment from the centre table, and the family library.

For, where the love of novel reading takes possession of the heart, the love of pure and rational piety cannot gain admittance; or, if previously there, must, inevitably, be expelled: and we might safely challenge all

Christendom for an instance in which an inveterate, novel reader has, at the same time, exhibited the enjoyments and fruits of a consistent, vital piety. And, if the act be not in itself directly immoral, it, in many instances, so gilds and sanctifies immorality, as to divest it, in a great degree, of its odious and abhorrent features—draws the reader into close sympathy with violators of all the statutes of gospel morality, and thus tends to the demoralization of the feelings, the principles, and, finally, the habits of its votary.

And, as it respects solid learning, it has not a more subtle, determined, or successful enemy, than the passion for novel reading. It is mental dissipation; it excites the passions, and engrosses the mind, while the machinery of sober, studious thought, is left dormant. You read, not to gain knowledge, but for the excitement produced; just as the confirmed inebriate drinks, not to quench thirst, but to gratify a vicious appetite, and produce excitement. And nothing can stand in a relation of strong antagonism to solid science and real literature, than this—falsely styled—*literature*. Neither the lovers, the readers, nor the writers of our novels, belong to the class of real scholars, or, at best, so only in extremely meagre proportion. True, some scholars have written novels, and, hence, the assumption seems to be set up, that all the writers of trashy fiction are men of literature—every such writer seeming to regard himself as entitled to a niche in the temple of literary fame, side by side with Sir Walter Scott. If, however, the great Northern leviathan could have foreseen, that his historical novels would place him in a

sort of relation of paternity, to all the slimy spawn, and literary tadpole tribe, which stir the miasmatic scum of the green pools of licentious fiction, it may well be doubted, whether he would have felt flattered by the character of the progeny. To suppose great mental power, and large literary attainments, necessary to the production of a modern novel, is a great mistake ; a sprightly imagination, a few scraps of French, a spicing of love and murder, and a dash of the licentious, will be found sufficient to procure, for a novel writer, a run of popular favor. But, furthermore, the novels of the day, not only contain no solid learning, and create no appetite to taste for such learning, but operate adversely to it. Beattie, in his moral science, says, “ To contract a habit of reading romances is extremely dangerous. They who do so, lose all relish for history, philosophy, and other useful knowledge, acquire a superficial and frivolous way of thinking, and never fail to form false notions of life, which come to be hurtful to young people, when they go out into the world.”

The testimony of the wise and good, to the general bad effects of these productions, is unanimous and strong ; a few of which only we will quote. An author of distinction says, “ *Novels*, according to the most celebrated authors on ethics, are, in general, the most insignificant and trifling of all the literary performances ; they are the productions of those who write for bread, or the offspring of vanity ; and the greater part of them are mean imitations of some successful compositions that have gone before them. When young persons waste their time in reading *novels*, the value of the ill spent hours is not all that is regretted : it is the

bad effect generally produced upon their minds, and, in many instances, on their morals. In *novels*, plays, romances—for all of them tend to the same end, the amusement of the idle—views of life are represented differently from what it really is; of course, virtue and vice receive a colouring which does not belong to them, and cannot but vitiate the taste of the reader, without leaving after it a single particle of useful knowledge; and for those reasons, they ought to be kept from youth.

“ Some authors have shown, that there are *novels* which have a tendency to debauch the innocent heart, on account of which I will say, with a moralist, ‘that genius, when employed on works whose tendency it is to demoralize, and to degrade us, should be contemplated with abhorrence, rather than with admiration; such a monument of its power may, indeed, be stamped with immortality, but, like the Colosseum at Rome, we deplore its magnificence, because we detest the purpose for which it was designed.’ ”

Rev. John Bennet says, “ A volume would not be sufficient to expose the dangers of *novels*. They lead young people into an enchanted country, and open to their view an imaginary world, full of inviolable friendship attachment, ecstacies, accomplishments, prodigies, and such visionary joys, as never will be realized in the coarseness of common life. The romantic turn they create, indisposes for every thing that is rational or substantial. They corrupt all principle, unnerve fortitude, and substitute, in its place, a sickly sensibility, that cannot relish common blessings, or common things: that is continually wounded with its own fancies, and

ever ‘ready to expire of a rose, in aromatic pain.’ Their sentiment is but a fine spun word for indelicate emotions. Their sympathy and friendships are, often, but a specious, flimsy covering for criminal attachments. Such false, overstrained ideas, have led many a poor girl to ruin. Under the notion of superior refinement, similarity of souls, and involuntary friendship, she has, gradually, been seduced from the paths of virtue to the commission of the grossest crimes. A fine, splendid idea, has been used to palliate a dreadful action. Sentiment has triumphed over the vulgar shackles of conscience, and of every social and moral obligation.”

Novel reading introduces its votaries to an imaginary world, a world of fiction, and peoples it with angels and heroes, of superhuman perfection; it generates aversion to the books and studies which we ought to love and cherish, to the duties we should perform, the business we must prosecute, and the persons with whom we must associate. It is productive of romantic and incongruous attachments, of reckless and foolish elopements and alliances, and is the fruitful source of innumerable unhappy matches.

A young man, who prudently respects his own happiness, will hesitate long before uniting his destiny with that of a novel-loving young lady, or committing his domestic hopes to the keeping of one so visionary and ethereal, in all her notions, so unreasonable in all her expectations. We dare not say that no novel-reading young lady ever so far reformed as to become a good wife, no more than that no confirmed rake ever makes a good husband; but the instances are, doubt

less, as rare in the one case as in the other ; and the young man who selects the first as a companion, enters upon an adventure of nearly equal perilousness as the young lady who accepts the hand of the second. Nor will we say, positively, that no inveterate novel-reading lady can be a good wife and mother ; but, if there be such an one, who is characterized by neatness, industry, and domestic economy, as the female head of a family, by constancy and affection, as a wife, and by tenderness, attention, and devotedness, as a mother, we have neither seen nor heard of the remarkable phenomenon.

And if this habit is unworthy an intellectual, or Christian lady, how utterly unbecoming must it be to the character of a dignified gentleman, and cultivated scholar. The sickly sentimentalism, and morbid sensibility, generated by it, are incompatible with the manlier qualities which should characterize man.

Pity it is that this pernicious practice receives such general encouragement, to the great detriment of real literature, vital piety, and domestic happiness. The pulpit, the religious press, and the united voice of Christians every where, should be directed to the extermination of this great evil. Let Methodist ministers remember, that, by this rule, it is made their duty to admonish all such offenders of the error of their ways ; and, if they prove incorrigible, and “will not be reproved,” they should be brought under discipline, and removed from the vineyard as fruitless trees, and cumberers of the ground. This last resort, however, would probably be rarely necessary, if preachers were faithful in guarding members, from their first entrance into the Church, against the evil. But it is to be feared,

that too many of them have not the faithfulness to guard their members against the danger; nor the independence and firmness to attempt their reformation, after they have strayed; nor to rid the church of them after they have become confirmed in the vice, and, through its influence, have lost both the form and the power of godliness.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SELF-INDULGENCE—WORLDLY MINDEDNESS— DISHONESTY IN BORROWING AND BUYING.

“SOFTNESS,” &c.—Duty of self-denial and cross-bearing—Effemiancy unbecoming the soldiers of Christ—Especially ministers of the Gospel—Example of our fathers—LAYING UP TREASURES, &c.—Inconsistency, danger, and folly of Christians laying up treasures on earth—Bishops’ note on the plea—“BORROWING, &c.—Piety and morality inseparable—A good rule to avoid going in debt—Bishops’ note on the plea—Punctuality

“SOFTNESS AND NEEDLESS SELF-INDULGENCE.”—To endure *hardness*, as good soldiers of Christ, is a duty resting on all who have enlisted to do battle in the cause of the Lord Jesus; and this duty poorly comports with the effeminacy of habit, and love of ease, so prevalent among professors of Christianity, and especially among the wealthy. We are commanded to deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily, if we would be the disciples of our Lord; but when we see Christians living in ease and luxury, indulging every appetite to the full, conforming to the maxims and manners of the world in dress, in equipage, in style of living—pursuing a course not to become unpopular with the ungodly and the fashionable ones around them—carefully avoiding all imputations of religious strictness, we are utterly at

fault in finding wherein their self-denial and cross-bearing consists. If the weather be cold, or damp, or warm, to an uncomfortable degree, they cannot go out to the house of God, for this would conflict with their habits of self-indulgence. Or, if an irreligious Sabbath visiter happen to call at the hour of religious worship, duty to God must be neglected, and the command of the Most High disobeyed, to gratify the preferences of a despiser, or, at best, negleter of religion ; because, to do otherwise would require the taking up of a cross, and cross-bearing makes up no part of the religion of such indolent and ease-loving Christians. They are willing to follow Christ when loaves and fishes are to be distributed, when the people are ready to take him by force, and make him a king, or when the multitude cast palm branches in his way, and cry Hosanna ; but when the popular cry is, away with him, crucify him, if they do not join in the popular clamor, they are silent, and walk no more with him, or, at best, follow him afar off. So long as we remain in a world of sin, of enemies and afflictions, the service of God must be a matter of self-denial, cross-bearing, and persecution ; and they who are unwilling to accept of Christ and heaven, on terms so contrary to human nature, may indeed be “called by his name to take away their reproach ;” but in the day of the Lord they shall stand without, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us ; but He, from within, shall say unto them, Depart from me, for I know you not.

But if softness and needless self-indulgence, is unbecoming the character of a member of the Church of Christ, how much more so a minister of his holy religion ? Our Master was incessant, in labors and

sufferings, yet had not where to lay his head. A life of toil, poverty, and persecution, was terminated by a death of ignominy and anguish. “Is the servant above his master, or the disciple above his Lord?” And yet, when his ministers drink but a drop, from the cup of bitterness which he drank to the dregs, how ready are they to complain of the hardness of their lot. The apostles and early disciples, suffered the loss of all things in the cause of their Lord—ease, comfort, property, reputation, and life itself, and yet, instead of murmuring at their lot, they glorified in being counted worthy to be partakers of the sufferings of Christ. The pious reformers followed in the steps of their holy exemplars, and were strangers to ease, indolence, and luxury; the fathers and pioneers of our own Church, were not unworthy the pious men they followed, but cheerfully labored and suffered abundantly to cultivate Emanuel’s lands. A more laborious, self-denying set of men, has not lived in the world since the time of the apostles, than the earlier stock of Methodist preachers; and through their untiring exertions, and quenchless zeal, great blessings have been conferred on this generation, and the world. And what they bought at the cost of comfort, health, and life itself, shall we, their sons, jeopard, forfeit, or sell for ease, repose, self-indulgence?

Where their sweat and blood enriched the vineyard of the Lord, shall softness, and needless self-indulgence on our part, cause it to be overgrown with thorns and briars—to be trodden down by the beasts of the mountain, or destroyed by the wild boar of the forest? We think of the persecutions, privations, hardships, and

astonishing labors, and journeyings of Wesley, of Whitefield, Asbury, McKendree, Lee, Garretson, and of hundreds of our pioneers, who penetrated the unbroken wilderness—preaching twice, thrice, frequently four times a day—travelling twenty, thirty, or forty miles, encountering frowns, storms, hatred and curses; often lodging in camps, or in the woods, and at best, in poor open hovels, living on coarse and scanty fare, and receiving no compensation for their arduous labors, or next to none; and then find ourselves inclined to complain of the labors, and compensation of a light and pleasant circuit, district, or station, which, as compared with those of our fathers, can hardly be regarded as more than a pleasant and well paid recreation, we should stand rebuked by the lives, labors, and sufferings of those holy, self-sacrificing men, through whose faithful instrumentality, we have been enabled to enter into a pleasant field made ready to our hand.

It is true, that the improvements of the country, and the extention, and strengthening of the Church, render the privations and sufferings endured by our fathers, now unnecessary—generally. The Church can now make the condition of her faithful ministers, in most places, temporally comfortable, and cannot stand guiltless in neglecting to do so; yet, it is also true, that there is much land yet to be possessed, the conquering of which will call for the same spirit of sacrifice and labor, that has achieved so much heretofore. The dark places of our country must be visited, the banner of the cross must float up from the Rocky Mountains, the voice of gospel invitation must be heard along the Pacific shore, the almost interminable intervening desert

must receive the light of salvation, and, to the heathen lands, the message must be carried; and men of "softness and needless self-indulgence," can never be the honored instruments of so arduous a work, so glorious an achievement.

"**LAYING UP TREASURE ON EARTH.**"—"Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth, but lay up treasure in heaven. Love not the world, nor the things of the world. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. The love of money, is the root of all evil." These, and the like declarations of inspired truth, admonish us of the folly of laying up treasure on earth, and the necessity of securing an inheritance where rust doth not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

That we may fully understand the import of this rule, and the divine command upon which it is based, we must bear in mind, that our *treasure* is that upon which our hearts are placed. Accordingly, Christ says, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The unspeakable riches of heaven, constitute no treasure to him whose heart is buried in the rubbish of earth. And so also, though a man have large possessions in the world, these are not his treasure, if his affection be set on things above.

Perhaps, worldly-mindedness is the dominant sin of professors of religion in this country. Temptations to seek wealth are so numerous and strong; fortunes are so suddenly acquired here by successful speculation, that many professors of religion are drawn into the snare. In countries, where successive generations follow on in the same track, each one expecting only to

spend his life in the humble manner of his fathers, without dreaming of reaching any different or higher sphere, where the door of speculation is open only to those of large wealth, the direct temptation to pursue the gilded phantom of wealth, with absorbing interest, is less powerful than here. But here, where the day laborer at twenty, is not unfrequently the *millionaire* at sixty; where every porter, and ostler expects to become a rich man, the current of worldly-mindedness is so powerful, that all are in danger of being carried down by it. It is not necessary to the laying up of treasure on earth, that we actually acquire wealth, but only, that we inordinately love and seek it. Perhaps, as many poor men are guilty of laying up treasure on earth as rich ones; so that no condition is free from this danger. Nor does it follow, that because we are engaged in the outward performances of religion, that we are free from an inordinate love of the world; for, we may attend to all the general duties of religion, and yet the love of earth may have such fast hold on our hearts as to taint, and corrupt all our religious services. Of this, we have a striking example, in the case of the rich young man who came to Christ, to inquire the way of life. He boldly took up his cross, and kneeling to his Saviour, inquired the way of salvation. His outward obedience was perfect: all the commandments had he kept from his youth up. But Christ, seeing in his heart a deep seated love of the world, which rendered all his obedience valueless, brought him to the trying issue at once. He had treasure on earth, and was now seeking for treasure in heaven, without relinquishing his heart's hold on the earthly: Christ stated

the condition in a form to strike at his besetting sin, “Sell all thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have *treasure in heaven.*” Treasure, in the sense here employed, he could not have in both earth and heaven, because, that which had his supreme affection was his treasure, and that supreme affection he could not give to both; Christ, therefore, gave him choice of the two—to have treasure on earth, or treasure in heaven. His heart clung to the world, he loved his wealth, and sadly relinquishing his claim to a heavenly treasure, which could be procured only at the sacrifice of what most of all he loved, “He went away very sorrowful, for he was very rich.” And who, when contemplating in this noble young man those amiable, and excellent qualities which elicited the declaration, that “Jesus, looking on him, loved him,” can refrain from a feeling of sorrow and pity, that such a man—so near the kingdom—should have preferred to lay up treasure on earth, when heaven was so freely, so cheaply offered to his acceptance? And, alas! how many thousands even of professors of religion are in a like condition! Earthly treasure has engrossed their hearts so wholly, that the love of God, of his laws, and ordinances is banished. What folly, infatuation, and madness are manifest in this course. Riches cannot ease our pains, soothe our sorrows, quiet our consciences, or protect us against the shafts of death; on the contrary, the tendency of wealth, direct or indirect, is rather to augment all those evils, than to assuage or remove them; and *love* of earthly treasure, tends still more directly and certainly to those unhappy effects. A more wretched, and harrowing spectacle can hardly be imagined, than that

presented in the closing scene of one, who having professed fealty and love to the Saviour, has, Judas like, sold his Lord for earthly treasure. Perhaps, he has all the while deluded himself into the belief, that his incessant race after wealth has not been prompted by the love of it, and, that he has been constantly laboring to do the will of God, and promote his glory; perhaps, he has strengthened this delusion by an occasional act of liberality, to the cause of God or humanity, persuading himself the while, that his hungering avariciousness is but a desire to acquire the means of aiding the holy enterprises of Christianity. When, at last, in the light of death-bed revelation, he discovers, that his earthly treasure is his only resource, and that this is now unavailing; that he has relinquished his hold on heaven, for that which now leaves him in the hour of extremity, to the lashings of conscience, and the bitterness of remorse, how unutterably wretched must be his state; how agonizing his reflections.

God graciously save us from the sin, and folly, of “laying up treasure on earth.”

In the Bishops’ notes on this rule, we find the following pointed, and judicious remarks, applying to the penitent, and the Christian: “He provides for his family with *Christian* wisdom, and *Christian* prudence; and all the rest he lays out for the relief of the poor and afflicted, and for the advancement of the kingdom of God upon earth. He does not wish to have his good things in this world, and afterwards to lift up his eyes in torments: but his highest ambition is to enjoy the sovereign good, the God of his salvation, to the utmost capacity of his renewed nature, and to all eternity.”

“BORROWING WITHOUT A PROBABILITY OF PAYING, OR TAKING UP GOODS WITHOUT A PROBABILITY OF PAYING FOR THEM.”—The separation of piety from morality—the notion that a man may be pious without fully respecting the laws of morality, is most mischievous and unscriptural; and though Protestant Christians do not, to any extent, recognize the doctrine as sound, yet too many of them act as if they fully believed it. One of the evil effects of this is, that as the world judge of our piety by our moral behavior, and not our professions, or our devotional observances, unless our conduct conform to the laws of a strict morality, the conclusion is reached, that either religion is a delusion, or that we are hypocritical or deluded, and inconsistent professors of it. Those moral laws, therefore, which have respect to the rights and interests of our fellow men, should be attended to with scrupulous exactness.

There may be cases in which it is proper and necessary to borrow money, or to take up goods “on credit,” but necessity alone should induce men to do this; and then it should be done only with a fair, and reasonable probability of being able to meet the obligation promptly at maturity. The habit of borrowing money, or taking up goods, when there exists no real necessity for it, and with a vague expectation of being able to meet the debt when due, is utterly wrong, and productive of serious evils; among which are the weakening of confidence in the integrity of the debtor, loss and embarrassment to him in making payment when compelled, and injury, and disappointment to the creditor.

A rule which has raised many poor men to competence, and some to wealth, is, to do without what it

would be convenient, or desirable to have, until they were able to pay for it. Some fortunes have been made by going in debt unnecessarily, but very many have been lost by the same course. There is a feeling of satisfaction, and independence, in being free from debt, well worth procuring at the cost of doing without the luxuries, and even some of the comforts of life.

The comment of the Bishops on this rule, is worthy of being carefully considered, and we here quote it entire. Speaking of the man who is truly desirous to be saved from his sins, they say: “He is strictly honest. He abhors the iniquitous attempt of getting money at his neighbor’s risk. But, alas, this is too common a practice, even among many who call themselves professors. A man is poor, and wishes to be rich; or he is rich, and wishes to be richer; he accordingly takes up a great quantity of goods, to form a large but false capital; or he borrows money of his friends for the same purpose: if he succeed, he has his ambition gratified, and becomes a man of fortune; if he fail, he is only where he was before, or at least, suffers but little; whilst those who have in confidence sold him goods, or advanced to him money, are the only, or chief sufferers. He is, what he would call tolerably safe at all events. This is, an unjust and iniquitous practice: and the more so, because the whole is carried on, under the mask of honor and honesty; of friendship, or integrity. Such persons should have no admission among us; or, if they have, should, when discovered, be expelled, as some of the greatest enemies of civil society; whose practice has immediate tendency to break all the bonds of social union, and to destroy all confidence among men.”

But, there is another impropriety of the same class, sufficiently common and injurious to claim a brief notice: it is the want of punctuality in the fulfilment of engagements generally, where promise, and not debt constitutes the bond of obligation. This is an evil, against which it is especially necessary for tradesmen, and mechanics to be well guarded. A mechanic is applied to, to do a job of work, or to furnish an article in his line for a customer. His previous engagements, will not permit him to do the work wanted by the time suggested; but, rather than lose the job, he directly promises, or, at least, authorizes the customer to expect that it will be executed in due time. When the time arrives the work is not done, the customer is disappointed, perhaps injured seriously, and loses confidence in the punctuality and veracity of the workman.

Christians should be very careful to avoid all these improprieties; they have the effect to bring dishonor on the cause of religion, and work injury, and not good, to those who fall into such errors. The avoidance of these occasions of offence, would do much to elevate the character of Christianity and its professors in the eyes of the world.

Our ministers would do a good service to the Church, and the world, by strictly attending to the enforcements of our rules on these subjects.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DOING GOOD.

This the second general evidence of a desire to flee the wrath to come—Bishops' note—The manner—to their bodies—by feeding—clothing—visiting—helping—Hospitality.

HAVING considered the evidences of a sincere desire for salvation, which those who *remain* in our communion are required to present in their abstinence from that which is sinful and improper; we now come to consider a second class of duty, affording additional evidence of true penitence and holy desire. This class is of a more direct and positive character than the former, comprehending the department of active, practical obedience. The following passage from the rules, introduces this class of duty :

“It is expected of all who continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

SECONDLY, by doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as is possible to all men.”

On this passage, Bishops Coke and Asbury remark:—
“True conviction of sin, and an earnest longing for salvation will be accompanied with every outward fruit of righteousness. The love of God may not yet have

become the governing principle of the whole soul, so as to make obedience flow, as from a second nature; but yet the contrite soul will have a constant fear of offending God, and this will be accompanied with a constant desire of pleasing him." This passage, incidentally, yet clearly, recognizes the condition of membership—true penitence—for which we have contended in these comments.

But the manner in which the doing of good is enjoined, is more specifically set forth in the following rules:

"TO THEIR BODIES, OF THE ABILITY WHICH GOD GIVETH, BY GIVING FOOD TO THE HUNGRY, BY CLOTHING THE NAKED, BY VISITING, OR HELPING THEM, THAT ARE SICK, OR IN PRISON."

The true penitent, and, more still, the assured Christian, will feel a deep and genuine sympathy for the sufferings of others, and this sympathy powerfully prompts to acts of relief and benevolence. Others may relieve the necessities from motives of policy, of interest, of popularity; but the Christian, and the sincere seeker of salvation, perform these acts from a principle of Christian sympathy. "This principle will make us feel for the infirmities of others, and sympathize with them. We shall delight to afford to the hungry and naked, the stranger, the sick and imprisoned, the necessaries, or comforts, they stand in need of. And, in all this, we shall consider the poor as the representatives of Jesus Christ, and that in doing it to *them* we do it to *Him*."—*Bishops' Notes*.

Christianity respects the bodily comforts of men, as well as their spiritual enjoyments; and our professing

religious comforts, our acts of piety towards God, and our professions of concern for the spiritual welfare of our fellow men, however diligently, or devoutly exhibited, will leave our Christian character so vitally defective, that, at the last day, we cannot hope for the approbation of our eternal Judge, without the performance of works of mercy; unless, indeed, we have not had the means, or opportunity, after our religious profession, of performing such acts. The goods of this world are variously distributed among men, some having much, some little, and some being entirely destitute; yet this inequality of distribution does not indicate that God designed some to revel in luxury, while others, equally industrious, and, perhaps, more virtuous, are left to suffer for the common necessaries of life; but rather indicates that the abundance of the rich is entrusted to them in the character of stewards of their Lord's goods, to be suitably distributed among the necessitous.

Hence it is a solemn duty of Christians, and seekers of salvation, according to their ability, to "feed the hungry, and clothe the naked." This is a merciful appointment of the universal Father; for, while it comforts and blesses the poor, who are the objects of such benevolent action, it affords an opportunity to the rich to realize a higher, purer happiness, in relieving suffering, than they could possibly derive from the squandering of their wealth in sensual indulgencies, in vain displays, or a miserly hoarding of it up, to become a curse to ungrateful and prodigal heirs. It is a high privilege, enjoyed by the rich, that they have the ability to become benefactors of the poor, fathers

to the orphan, helpers of the widow, and efficient promoters of evangelizing enterprises. To desire, submissively, the acquisition of property, for the good it will enable us to perform, is entirely laudable; but to desire, and love wealth, for the pleasure of possessing it, or of appropriating it to purposes of display, or sensual gratification, is criminal in a high degree. And he who, from such motives, withholds assistance from the needy, must expect to hear, from the final Judge, the terrible denunciation, "Depart from me; for I was hungry, and you fed me not; naked, and you clothed me not." Yet how many are there who profess Christ's religion, and habitually withhold needed aid from his suffering poor, his ministers, and his cause! We have known men, who professed to be followers of Christ, possessing an annual income of hundreds, or even thousands, above the moderate demands of their families, who yet did not give to the suffering poor around them, their own destitute ministers, the cause of missions, and all other benevolent works, as much in a year as the profits of their business for one week—perhaps not one day. If such men can possess, and enjoy religion, it must be a religion which Christ has no where recognized.

But there is another large class of delinquents, who are ever proclaiming their charitable disposition, and regretting their want of means to carry out their benevolent wishes, who yet entirely fail to do what is fairly in their power. There are other modes of charity besides giving of our substance to feed and clothe the poor, modes by which the poor themselves have the privilege of exercising benevolence effectively, in "visiting them that are sick, or in prison."

“Man shall not live by bread alone.” In conditions of destitution, or distress, the mere supplying of one’s physical wants does not meet either the requirements of the gospel, or the demands of the afflicted. Suffering calls for sympathy not less than for supplies ; and it has often happened, that the afflicted have felt a sweeter solace in the warm sympathy of the poor, than in the contributions of the rich, unaccompanied by that kindly feeling which is ever grateful to the heart. To visit the sick, and the prisoner, is a duty enjoined on all, the performance of which has the promise of approbation at the last day ; and they who give food and clothing to the poor, and fail to visit the hovels of suffering and sorrow, render it impossible for Christ to say to them, at the day of final audit, “I was sick, and ye visited me ; in prison, and ye came unto me.” But the man whose resources are too limited to enable him to contribute of his substance, yet who visits the afflicted, serves and comforts them according to his ability—who represents their wants, and pleads their cause with the rich, is a real benefactor, and will be approved as the friend of the Saviour. In truth, the active movers of the springs of benevolence, are very generally those who are not rich, except in faith and good works, but who seek out objects of charity, and then, with the eloquence of a deep and lively sympathy, appeal to the rich for the means of relief. We have often seen a single female, in limited circumstances, start into lively flow a stream of diffusive benevolence, more wide in its range, and fruitful in its overflow, than any thing set on foot, or pushed to consummation, by the man of millions. No discharge of duty is productive of a more pure, and

delightful pleasure, than visiting of the sick and afflicted; and yet, Christ has many ministers, who are much more desirous to imitate their Master in preaching to the multitudes, than in visiting, and ministering to the sick and poor.

And, perhaps, the neglect of prisoners is a still more general failing of Christians, than the neglect of the sick and the poor. In all our large towns, and cities, there are persons immured in the prisons, who generally receive very little attention from Christians, and Christian ministers. True, they may have sinned grievously against society, and against God; yet, shut out from society, in their cheerless imprisonment, the mind necessarily turns upon itself, and serious reflections are entertained by those who have been most thoughtless. In this state of things the unfortunate prisoner is often prepared, not only to appreciate kind attentions, but no less to receive lasting impressions of good, which, if properly followed up, might produce permanent reformation. Such fields of labor, however, do not seem to accord with our estimate of our own powers, which we seem to regard as demanding a more important and honorable sphere of operation. Many ministers, sufficiently ambitious to emulate Bossuet, Tillotson, or Whitefield, in sacred eloquence, manifest little disposition to emulate the Christ-like humanity of Howard, in visiting the gloomy cell of the prisoner; yet some of the representatives of the Saviour dwell in prisons, and the neglect of them is charged as a neglect of Christ.

Another act of goodness, positively required, but too much neglected by Christians, is attention to strangers.

“I was a stranger, and ye took me in,” is one of the beatitudes to be bestowed by the Judge, on the truly righteous, at the last day. “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers,” is a command by the Apostle; (Heb. ii. 13,) and its observance is encouraged by the fact, that Abraham and Lot “entertained angels unawares.” It is true, the general want of public places of entertainment, gave the command a peculiar application and force, at the time it was written; yet the same thing, in other forms, is equally obligatory on us, and on all.

The entire travelling community, to be sure, do not now have to rely upon private hospitality, as in ancient times, yet it very often happens that the traveller, benighted, bewildered, or in thinly settled regions, has to apply for entertainment at private habitations; and it has sometimes happened that he has been refused protection from the storm, when exposed, and food when hungry, because it was not perfectly convenient for the family, so called on, to afford the needed accommodation. When persons, who have refused hospitality to the stranger, on the grounds of mere selfishness, shall appear before the Judge of all, and hear him say, “I was a stranger, and you took me not in,” what a pitiful defence will it be to respond to the condemnatory accusation, “Lord, it was not perfectly convenient, and would have put me to some trouble to entertain thee in the person of the weary sojourner.”

Again: when strangers come into a community to sojourn or reside, the sense of loneliness attendant on that state may be greatly relieved, by kind attentions on the part of the residents of the place. Especially, is this the duty of Christians, who should be very

attentive to fellow Christians when coming among them, to sojourn or reside. The stranger should meet a kind greeting, and cordial welcome, among his strange brethren. The neglect of such attention, has often had a most unhappy influence on the feelings of the stranger, and not unfrequently, on his religious enjoyment. It is an excellent plan, when Church members come into a new place to reside, on the occasion of presenting their Church letters, for the pastor to introduce them to the notice of the membership, announce their places of abode, and remind the Church of the duty of making their acquaintance, and of bestowing on them the attention due to strangers and brethren.

CHAPTER XXX.

DOING GOOD.—TO THE SOULS OF MEN— FRUGALITY, &c.

Doing good to the souls of men—by instructing—reproving—exhorting—Special duty to Christians and true penitents—Bishops' note Diligence—duty of—of little value without *Frugality*—*Running the Christian race patiently—self-denyingly—cross-bearingly—submitting to and looking for persecution.*

BY DOING GOOD—“*To their souls, by instructing, reproving, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine, that ‘we are not to do good, unless OUR HEARTS BE FREE TO IT.’”*

The first duty here inculcated is, to *instruct* the ignorant. The understanding must be enlightened, in order to the religious improvement of men; for, the conscience, in its operations, follows the current of light in the understanding. He whose understanding is dark, with regard to his relation to God, and the plan of salvation, will have an erring conscience. The conscience reproves us, only for doing that which our understanding regards as wrong, or neglecting what our judgment approves as right. The conscience of the Hindoo, requires of him services and sacrifices in direct violation of the law of God; and the only way of

rectifying his conscience, is, by enlightening the mind. This view is in accordance with that given by Isaiah the Prophet: “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have *rebelled* against me.” But why did they rebel? Because, “*Israel doth not know, my people do not consider.*” Ignorance is given as the cause of rebellion against God. Ignorance is the fruitful source of crime, and is often the mother of superstition; but it never was, and never can be, “the mother of rational devotion,” as has been alleged, by those interested in keeping the multitude in ignorance, that they might have control of the popular conscience. Christianity, at the beginning, pushed its conquests by rending away the veil of ignorance from the minds of bigotted Jews, and deluded Gentiles. The reformation under Luther, commenced by removing the rubbish of ignorance, beneath which popery had buried the truths of Christianity; and light in the understanding is the foundation of all genuine reformation. The passions may be excited, the fears may be aroused, and these may receive a religious direction; but, if the mind be not enlightened with regard to the nature of duty, and the plan of salvation, no permanent good can be expected to result.

The first duty, therefore, to the souls of men, is to impart instruction. This duty rests with peculiar force on ministers of the grace of God. Eloquent, and pretty declamation, which has become so very popular in the sermons of the day, may serve to please and amuse; but correct knowledge of the plan of salvation, is not likely to be gathered from gaudy tropes, nor the impenitent heart to be convicted of sin, by the theatrical

delivery of artificially rounded periods. The duty of instruction is not, however, restricted to the pulpit; it is the duty of every Christian, and every seeker of salvation, to impart knowledge, and, especially, religious knowledge, to the extent of their ability and opportunity. One of the excellent modes of religious instruction, which has become common and highly profitable, is that of Sabbath schools. Here is opened a delightful field of usefulness, for all who are willing to enter upon, and cultivate it; and the friends of religious instruction should never be satisfied, until, in every neighborhood in the land, a good and permanent Sabbath school is established.

Instruction in families, of children and servants, is a duty resting on the heads of families as a sacred and indispensable obligation. This should be the nursery of knowledge. This teaching goes in advance of that of the Sabbath school, as that goes before, and prepares the way for the teachings of the sanctuary. But, in one and the other, and all, the Bible is to be looked to as the great source of religious knowledge, the text book of all our instructions.

Instruction being laid as the foundation, another duty is to *reprove*. Reproof will have little effect, unless the enlightenment of the mind give it force. But, that reproof may be successful, it is necessary, that it be judiciously and prudently administered. Some Christians neglect this duty of reproving sin on their neighbors almost entirely; while others do it in a manner so harsh and unkind as to irritate, rather than reform. If we would reprove with good effect, we must convince the subjects of our reproof that we are actuated by

feelings of kindness, and motives of friendship. Where this is prudently done, reproof is seldom offensive, and very often effectual. It is seldom advisable to give reproof publicly; it tends to mortify, and offended pride resents the reproof as an unkind exposure of one's errors before others. The same reproof, given in private, would probably be kindly received, and perhaps effectual. A recent incident, exemplified the truth of what we have just said. A minister was travelling in the mail coach, in which was a gentleman who indulged in much profane language. The minister, instead of harshly reproving him, sought to cultivate his friendship, and secure his confidence. When he had reason to believe, that he had, in a good degree, succeeded in this object, he took occasion, at an exchange stand, to invite him to take a walk with him, and, when alone, tenderly and affectionately reproved his evil habit. The gentleman appeared truly to regret his course, asked pardon, and promised not again to be guilty of the like offence; and, to the end of the journey, no more profane language was heard from him. Even in reproving children and servants, parents and masters often defeat their own objects by administering reproof in a tone and manner calculated to mortify and vex, rather than reform. With them, reproof has no other meaning than harsh censure, and their words harden when they should reclaim.

Another duty is to *exhort* those with whom we have intercourse, to the performance of duty, and the avoidance of evil and error. Where the understanding is properly instructed, affectionate exhortation—entreaty—persuasion, is a powerful instrument in waking

up serious reflection, and in bringing the heart to penitence. And this is a mode of preaching, in which all may bear a part—the minister, the exhorter, the leader, the Sabbath school teacher, the private member, the father, the mother, the master, the friend, all may labor successfully, in their respective spheres, in this good work. Aye, even the unassured penitent may labor here, and should labor for the good of others.

The remarks in the Bishops' notes, on this last point, are worthy of attention. They say: "It is a perfect mistake to suppose, that a real penitent cannot, or is not called on, to do good *to the souls of others*. Many, in their awakened state, have done considerable good in this respect. But when the love of God is become the reigning principle of the soul, we hunger and thirst for the salvation of others. Our cry is, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.'"

And these duties are to be performed consistently, faithfully, and from settled principle, and not from feeling. We are to "trample under foot that enthusiastic doctrine, that we are not to do good unless our hearts be *free to it*." The feelings and inclinations of the heart can never be relied on, as guides in the matter of duty. Let us lay it down as a rule of conduct, that we will pray, read God's word, attend his worship, instruct, reprove, exhort, relieve the poor, and visit the sick, only when our hearts incline us to those duties; and, very soon, our hearts will fail ever to prompt us thereto, at all. The power of godliness will soon be lost, the *form* will follow, and soon our

religious professions will be at end. Settled religious principle should govern all our conduct, whether our hearts incline to duty or not. The influence of principle, will form a religious habit, and principle and habit conjoined, will powerfully control the feelings and inclinations of the heart. Such, indeed, is the order of grace, that, in proportion as we submit ourselves to the government of principle, and habits of Christian duty, based on principle, in like proportion will our hearts be "free" to the performance of duty. He who thus is "instant in season, and out of season," in the discharge of duty, will seldom have much occasion to complain about feelings and inclinations. And, indeed, be these as they may, he is not shaken or turned aside from duty by them. God has commanded him to a certain course of obedience, and his command is followed, regardless of frames and feelings.

"By doing good to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in business; and so much the more, because the world will love its own, and them only."

"Though he does good to all, according to his ability, yet he particularly feels for the members of Christ's mystical body. *They* are to him as his own soul. With them he experiences an union which the world is unacquainted with. They are like the members of his own family; they are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh." (*Bishops' Notes.*) "Let us do good unto all men, *especially* to them who are of the household of faith." Gal. vi. 10.

The force of the general obligation "to do good to all men," is by no means weakened by the special duty we owe to those who are of the household of faith. Some ill-disposed persons have attempted to reproach our Church, on account of this rule, seeming to forget that it is in the spirit, and nearly in the very language of the apostolic injunction, quoted above; but the juster ground of reproach is found in our too general neglect of its practical observance. Professed Christians have made themselves appear inconsistent—not to say contemptible—in the eyes of the world, by bestowing patronage and favors lavishly on wealthy sinners—for advantage—while their own brethren, deserving and needy, are entirely neglected. This will never be the case when the true spirit of Christianity reigns in the heart. If we love the Saviour aright, we will love with a special affection his children, and those seeking earnestly to be such; and this love will manifest itself, by such indications as show the affection of members of the same family for each other. Other circumstances being equal, Christian relationship should govern our preferences in relations of business.

"By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed."

The comment of the Bishops on this rule is excellent. We quote it at large: "It is frequently one of the devices of Satan, to tempt the children of God to be negligent in their business, under the pretext that they will be able to live more in heaven by having nothing to do with earthly things. But the believer, when called to labor in a profession, or trade, for the support

of his family, or to fill up some useful station in society, may so intermix pious ejaculations with his studies, or labors, and improve so many short intervals in private prayer, as not only to preserve his grace, but to increase daily in the divine life. Ejaculations are swift messengers, which soon enter heaven, and soon bring down a gracious answer."

The Christian is commanded to be "*Not slothful in business*;" and, at the same time, " *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*" Rom. xii. 11. So, again, "*Provide things honest in the sight of all men,*" ver. 17.

There are no lazy Christians. Christianity is an active, operative principle, and, wherever it reigns in the soul, it sets its subject to work actively, diligently, industriously. And this principle operates as actively with regard to our temporal business, as our religious duties. The Christian is industrious, that he may comfortably and honestly support his family, that he may have to give to the poor, and the cause of God, and benevolence, and that censure may not be brought on the cause of Christ. To idle time, is to waste one of the most precious and valuable gifts of God, and cannot be done innocently. Were all professed Christians as observant of this rule as the gospel requires, many who are now in straightened circumstances, would not only be well supplied with the comforts of life, but would have to give to the needy.

Not only does this rule enjoin diligence, but also *frugality*. Without frugality, industry is of little avail. By frugality, is meant that prudent economy in the appropriation and use of money, time, and all other resources and means of usefulness and comfort, by

which nothing is wasted, or uselessly applied. Perhaps more is lost by want of frugality than want of industry. Some persons, after using commendable diligence in earning, or producing the means of temporal comfort, allow nearly all to be consumed in extravagance, lost by waste, or suffered to go to ruin by negligence. Principle and system, in all our transactions, are necessary to a proper frugality; without these, economy and extravagance, frugality and waste, will, alternately, have ascendency in our affairs. In many Christian families, there is waste enough, through want of Christian frugality, to supply food and raiment to as many more persons as are supplied. In this land of abundance, the very bounty of Providence seems to foster in the habits of the people a wastefulness, and want of frugality, entirely at war with the principles of Christianity.

It becomes, therefore, all Christians, and seekers of religion, to evidence the sincerity of their desire for salvation, "By all diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed."

"By running with patience the race that is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ; to be as the filth and offscouring of the world, and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them, falsely, for the Lord's sake."

A great excellency of Christians, is to run the rough, long, and toilsome race set before them, *with patience*. It is to them who "*patiently continue in well doing*," that the promise of eternal life is given. And the

promise to those who *wait* on the Lord, is, that they shall *run*, and not be *weary*, and walk, and not *faint*. Many persons make a fair start, and run well for a season, but they become weary ; and, because they lack patient perseverance, turn back again to the beggarly elements of the world.

Of self-denial, and daily cross-bearing, we have treated with considerable fullness in another place ; therefore, it is not necessary to add any thing further on those points of duty here. But nearly related to these are the passive duties here inculcated, of *submission* to “ bear the reproach of Christ,” to be looked on as “ the filth and offscouring of the world,” and to have “ all manner of evil said of us falsely, for the Lord’s sake.” This is a form of cross-bearing, and if not an active taking up of the cross, it is yet a passive bearing of it ; and it has been justly remarked, that it is more difficult to attain excellence in the passive duties, which call for submission, endurance, and resignation, than those which call only for active obedience. Peter, in the performance of active service, in the cause of his Master, was ready to fight and to die for him ; but being restrained in his valorous purpose of contending, single handed, against the whole host that came to arrest his Lord, he, who was ready to *fight* to the death for Christ, had not the courage to bear up against the *reproaches* of Christ ; and the sneer of a servant maid intimidated him more, by far, than all the swords and staves of the High Priest’s minions. So there are many professors of religion, who are willing to *do* in the great active, public duties of religion, who yet cannot bear, or *suffer* the reproaches of Christ. They will

labor, or *give*, in the cause of religion, but when their profession subjects them to reproach, or persecution, they are at once vanquished.

But if we expect to be *true* Christians, we must resolve to pursue such a course of active and passive obedience to the will of God, as will inevitably subject us to reproach and persecution. Just so certainly as we are unflinchingly firm, and faithful, in our Christian conduct—bear a steadfast testimony against popular vice, and, self-denyingly, follow the Lord—so sure will evil be said of us, falsely, by some one. Mr. Wesley, himself, was under the habitual government of this rule in a high degree, and recommended it as well by example as by precept. On one occasion he remarked, that he believed every form of false accusation had been brought against him, except that of *drunkenness*; to which a gentleman present replied, that he had heard a person say, that he saw Mr. Wesley so drunk that he could not walk straight. “Then, thank God,” responded Mr. Wesley, “I can now say that I have had *all* manner of evil said of me, falsely, for the Lord’s sake.”

The carnal mind is enmity against God; and though it may be reconciled to a fashionable religion, or a compromising Christianity, it will ever, while unrenewed, be, in feeling, the enemy of the truly pious. All, therefore, who will live godly in Christ, must suffer persecution. And it is the true spirit of Christianity to rejoice in it, remembering, that “so persecuted they the prophets which were before them.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

ORDINANCES OF RELIGION

Public worship—reading and preaching God's word—*Lord's Supper*—Nature and uses of this Sacrament explained in six particulars—Qualifications for partaking of—Difficulties with brethren—Right of penitents—Spirit in which it should be partaken.

“It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

“Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are,

“The public worship of God: The ministry of the word, either read or expounded.”

THE public worship of God, as distinguished from private, and domestic, or family worship, appears to have been formally instituted during the journeying of the emancipated Israelites from Egypt, through the Arabian wilderness, to the land of Promise. Then were appointed forms of public devotion calculated to impress, and improve the moral feelings; modes of religious instruction; an order of men, specially consecrated to the service of this religious organization—which was thenceforward called the Church—a fixed place of worship, dedicated exclusively to sacred uses. This place, at which the people first assembled in mass,

to offer up their united devotions, was called the *Tabernacle*. It was succeeded, afterwards, by the Temple and Synagogues; and, under the gospel dispensation, by what have come to be generally called Churches.

The forms of worship then instituted were most solemn and impressive, and exerted a powerful influence on the religious feelings and habits of the people. Indeed, so marked was the influence of these services, on the personal and national character of the Jews, that all their national defections were preceded and accompanied by a neglect of their public worship. And, at the present day, the tone of public morality is found, in all nations, to be quite truthfully indicated by the purity of public worship, and the attention, and respect paid to it by the people. Not only by Jews and Christians, but even by Pagans, who have risen above the lower conditions of barbarism, public worship is respected as essential to a healthy state of morals, and to the culture of a spirit of piety.

The grand instrumentality by which public worship is rendered useful, in instructing and in waking up religious consideration, is preaching, or the reading, expounding, and enforcing the truths and duties of religion, as found in the word of God. This particular form of religious instruction and improvement, appears to have originated in the circumstances by which the Jews were surrounded, after their return from Babylonish captivity. Those who were born in Babylon, during their captivity, on the return of the nation, were very imperfectly acquainted with their mother Hebrew tongue; hence, the Priests read to them from the Book of the Law, and gave the sense distinctly, which is the

same that we now call preaching. The word of God is the foundation of all proper pulpit instruction, and exhortation. The public reading of that word in the congregation, was an important part of the service of the Synagogue. Accordingly, we find Christ, when officiating in the Synagogue, first reading a portion of Scripture from the Old Testament, and then explaining its import to the congregation. The Apostles, in their preaching, usually either read, or quoted largely from the sacred Scriptures. And in several of the Churches —and so of our own—the ordination vows, bind the minister to instruct the people out of the word of God ; and in the form of ordination itself, the authority is specifically given, and the duty enjoined, of reading the holy Scriptures in the congregation, and of preaching the same. True gospel preaching, therefore, consists in reading, expounding, and enforcing the word of God. The nearer the preacher keeps to this fountain of truth, the more strictly his spirit, his language, his doctrine, accord with its teachings and models, the more likely will he be to succeed in his holy vocation.

When we have opportunity to hear the word of God preached, it is our duty to do so, even though the talents, or manner of the preacher, should not exactly suit our taste ; for, if we hear with a due mixture of faith, we can hardly fail to be profitted by the preaching of any minister of Christ. But when we have not opportunity of hearing the word preached, still, where there are several Christians resident conveniently near to each other, they should have public worship, at least on the Sabbath. Some one can read the word of God to the congregation, and, in many

cases, there are those present who can exhort the people, and so enforce the holy truths read. At least, public prayer can be offered, in addition to reading the word, and singing the praise of God; for every true Christian is a praying man, and a large proportion of those who are familiar with closet communion with God, as they should be, can, if necessary, lead the public devotions of the congregation. Indeed, a very profitable form of public worship, is that in which Christians meet for the purpose of offering public prayer to God. The disciples of Christ, while waiting for the descent of the Holy Ghost, were engaged in the exercises of a devout prayer meeting. So when Peter was cast into prison, for the testimony of Jesus, the devout disciples appear to have assembled, to hold a solemn prayer meeting, that Divine help might be sent in their trying circumstances. Indeed, prayer is the mighty resource of the Christian, because prayer is a casting of ourselves upon the Divine resources of our Father in heaven, and public prayer is quite as necessary as any other part or form of public worship.

Man is endowed with social qualities, and his feelings, his hopes, and enjoyments, are greatly influenced by association. A large proportion of the vice extant in individual character, has been superinduced by corrupting associations; and the same principle which generates vicious habits, when rightly directed, promotes the development of virtuous affections. Hence, public worship is calculated to exert a beneficial influence on all who participate in its exercises; and it is the duty, especially, of all Christians, to encourage and attend

upon it, and to induce all others over whom they may have influence to do so likewise.

The influence of public meetings, and their power on the popular mind, is well understood by politicians, and by them turned to good account as respects their objects. The same is true, with respect to all movements of public concernment; and Christians cannot forsake the assembling of themselves together without danger, and hardly without detriment to their individual and associate prosperity and enjoyment. Christ not only enjoined this duty, by example and precept, but strongly encourages it, by vouchsafing a blessing to the smallest number that can constitute a religious association. “Where *two* or *three* are gathered together in my name, there am I in their midst.” The wilful neglect of public worship is utterly incompatible with religious prosperity, and even with true Christian character.

“THE SUPPER OF THE LORD.”—This sacred institution has its antetype in the Jewish Passover, in which the protection of the Israelites against the destroying angel was commemorated with appropriate solemnities. The paschal lamb, the blood of which was the medium of deliverance, or protection, was a lively type of the slaughtered Lamb of God, given for the sin of the world. When Christ celebrated the Passover with his disciples, just before his crucifixion, he instituted the *Christian* Passover, commemorative of the offering up of himself as a sin-offering, and of the deliverance wrought out for us by his death and mediation.

As the command to the Israelites was positive to observe the Passover, so the command to Christians is

positive to observe the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. "Do this in remembrance of me," is a command as explicit, and imperative, as the command, "Repent and be converted." And yet, many professed Christians feel perfectly at liberty to neglect this solemn duty.

As to the nature, and uses of this Sacrament, we may, without entering into a formal defence of it, offer a few general remarks.

1. Having been in use, in the Christian Church, in all periods of its recorded history, we must trace back its origin to the source assigned it by the New Testament writers—the institution of Christ. It is not pretended, that it was introduced at any specified period of later date; consequently, was ordained of Christ himself, and so becomes a standing corroborative evidence of the truth of Christianity.

2. It is a perpetual memorial of the great sacrifice through which Christians look for salvation. Great events, and great benefactions conferred on mankind, have ever been commemorated by appropriate ceremonies, or solemnities, as being a tribute due to those who have made themselves public benefactors. And, if to observe the nativity of Washington, or the birthday of American liberty, be promotive of the spirit of patriotism; to commemorate, in a proper manner, the achievements of the Captain of our salvation, and a world's emancipation from the thralldom of sin, must be profitable in promoting a spirit of devout piety.

3. It is an expression of gratitude, of thankfulness to our Lord Christ, for his unspeakable gift; and, as expressive of this, it has, from early periods of the

Church, been called the *eucharist*. The right partaking of this sacrament, is eminently calculated to quicken sentiments of gratitude to God.

4. It is an expression of our reliance on the atonement of Christ, represented by it, and our willingness to receive that atonement, in the manner prescribed by the word of God. Whoever, therefore, receives it intelligibly, and truly, says, by the act, "I take Christ for my portion, and depend, alone, on his merits for salvation."

5. It is a solemn profession of our faith in, and allegiance to Christ; and, in receiving it, we declare our belief in Him, as the Saviour, and our determination to obey his requirements; hence, it is called a Sacrament, as being a pledge of allegiance and fidelity, partaking of the nature and solemnity of an oath.

6. It is an expression of Christian fellowship for the followers of Christ.

If the partaking of food together, be expressive of friendship, much more so the breaking of that bread which symbolizes the broken body of the Son of God.

The qualifications necessary to a right partaking of this Sacrament, here demand a passing notice; and, particularly, in connection with the last item named—the subject of Christian fellowship.

Christians frequently decline partaking of this Sacrament, because they have not full confidence in some other person or persons communing. We regard it as a full reply to this difficulty or scruple, that Christ himself partook of it with one he knew to be a traitor. That it is intended as a general expression of Christian

friendship, is very clear; but equally clear is it, that no sincere Christian is required, or even authorized, to neglect this duty because unworthy persons partake presumptuously. By communing, you express friendship for all true Christians and penitents, and the presumption of charity, in the absence of conclusive evidence to the contrary, is, that all who partake of this Sacrament, sustain that character. But, should you be compelled to think differently of some who do partake, remember, you may mistake their true character; and, if not, yet you are neither required, nor permitted, to neglect a positive duty on account of the character or conduct of another.

Another case of difficulty is that in which your brother has something serious against you. "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." We suppose the true sense of this passage has been misapprehended. It cannot mean, that however innocent we may be in the matter of complaint against us, and however mistaken our brother may be of our true character, or however obstinate or unforgiving he may be towards us, that we dare not partake of the supper until we have made him our friend; for this, in many cases, would be impossible, and impossibilities are never required in the gospel; nor is it required that one should do penance for another's sins, mistakes, or obstinacy. The thing required, then, is evidently this: if you know your brother to have "aught against you," and if you have injured him, or otherwise erred, confess your fault and labor to regain his confidence; or, if unconscious of any

impropriety, use all the proper means in your power to convince him of his mistake. If he will not suffer you even to approach him, try to gain your object by the mediation of others. But, if, after all, you cannot reconcile your brother, only be sure that you cherish no enmity in your heart against him, and then it is not only your privilege, but your duty to go to the supper of the Lord.

It seems remarkable, that so many Christians should place their right to partake of the eucharist at the disposal of others; and that the lack of confidence in another, or another's want of confidence in them, should be made the ground of excluding themselves from this holy ordinance. The question of fellowship involved in the case, can only have respect to the state of our *own* feelings, and not those of other persons, over whose feelings and conduct we can have no control. If we "are in love and fellowship," so far as our own hearts are concerned, if we sincerely desire to love God and his children, no power on earth or hell has a right to debar us. Again, the same principle that keeps us from the table at which some one kneels whose piety we doubt, or who doubts ours, may keep us away ever; for we can hardly expect ever to have full confidence in every member of even our own branch of the visible Church, nor that every one every where will have full confidence in us; and, whether the *objecting* or *objectionable* brother kneel at the opposite end from us of the bench or chancel, or at the opposite end of the town, the State, or the continent, the principle is the same, for the eye of God beholds you communing *together*, in his holy Sacrament,

whether you be kneeling five feet apart, or five hundred miles.

The question has been often made, Has any one a right to partake of the Lord's Supper who is not fully assured of acceptance with God? This question came up incidentally in the early part of these comments, in considering the conditions of membership, and we then, as we think, proved the affirmative of the proposition. For this reason, and that the subject of the eucharist is broadly presented in our Articles of Faith, it is not necessary to enter more fully into it in this place.

It is, then, the duty of all who truly and sincerely repent of their sins, and are desirous to be in love and harmony with their neighbors, and are determined to lead a new—that is, a Christian—life, obeying the commandments of God, to partake of this holy Sacrament. We have no right to expect the blessing of God promised to obedience, if we neglect, habitually, a positive command of God—and such is the command in question. The fear of “eating unworthily,” and so incurring condemnation to themselves, by which so many persons are kept from this duty and privilege, is not a legitimate excuse for the neglect: for, if you do not “sincerely repent of your sins,” &c., you have no right to a place in the Church, at all; and, if you do, and are ready to take the vow of allegiance upon you, you are bound to obey this command with all the other commands of God.

The habitual neglect of this duty subjects members, under these rules, when properly enforced, to the exercise of discipline, as in other cases of neglect.

As to the spirit in which we should partake, it should be the spirit of *self-examination*. Let a man examine himself, and so eat. We should rigidly examine our feelings, our motives, our purposes, that so we may present to God a heart of pure intentions and pious desires. It should be a spirit of deep *humility*. And if we rightly consider our own utter unworthiness, in connection with the abundant goodness of God, especially in the gift of his Son, we must be humbled. It should be a spirit of sincere *penitence*. We should come earnestly repenting of our sins, and imploring forgiveness through Christ. It should be a spirit of *faith*, confidently relying on God for the fulfilment of his great and precious promises made to us through the blood of the covenant. It should be a spirit of *love* and *forgiveness*; for, if Christ implored forgiveness, and exercised pity on his murderers, when we approach the dread symbol of his love and agony, we should cast away all malice, and hatred, and every feeling contrary to that which moved the Son of God to pour out his soul a ransom for his enemies. It should be a spirit of fervent *prayer* to God, to enable us rightly to discern the Lord's body, and to partake of its symbol to our spiritual comfort. It should be a spirit of *gratitude* and *rejoicing*, for the wonderful condescension and grace of the blessed Lord. With such a spirit we should approach the holy Communion; and, having devoutly partaken, we should give ourselves to prayer and meditation, at least for a short space of time after retiring from the table.

So used, we shall find it the bread of life to our souls.

CHAPTER XXXII

ORDINANCES OF RELIGION—PRAYER—FASTING.

FAMILY PRAYER—Nature of the duty—Family religion before congregational—The head of family the Priest—Benefits of—Proper time for—Errors and mistakes about—Having but part of the family present—Tedium—Hurry—Want of co-operation in heads of family—**PRIVATE PRAYER**—How performed, and advantages of it—**FASTING, OR ABSTINENCE**—Nature of the duty—Examples—Concluding paragraph of the Rules—Analysis of it.

“**FAMILY AND PRIVATE PRAYER.**”—Family devotion is a duty arising out of the family organization. Of public worship we have spoken as a part of the religious organization of a community ; and family worship is to the family circle, what *public* is to a community, only in a more personal and concentrated form. This form of social devotion preceded public worship, in the order of institution and time. Congregational worship was not formally instituted until the period of the migration of Israel from Egypt to Canaan ; but family worship evidently existed at a much earlier period. The head of the family acted as priest, and took the lead in the sacrifice, and devotional services of the house. When a distinct order of priesthood was instituted, it was to act in a sphere which, previously, had no natural officiating

head to act in a sacerdotal capacity; that sphere was the public congregation, or general assembly, of worshippers, composed of a collection of many families. To infer, therefore, that when the priestly order was regularly constituted, it ceased to be the right and duty of the head of a family to officiate as priest, to the domestic circle, of which he is the natural religious guide, and guardian, in what pertains to domestic relations and duties, is contrary to the reason of the case. The spheres are different; the rights and duties are distinct. The priest, or consecrated minister, is the officer of the Church, and his official rights and duivies pertain to that organization as such; but he has no more right, in virtue of his office, to assume the control of the family devotions of another man's household, than that man has to assume his place in the public congregation.

True, when a minister is present at the domestic worship of a religious family, it is usual, and proper, to invite him to lead in that worship; yet this is a courtesy extended to him, as one peculiarly devoted to the service of God, and the church, and not a right belonging to his office. The head of the family calls on the minister to officiate in his place at the family altar, just as the minister invites another minister to officiate in his stead in the public congregation. The head of the household may, sometimes, properly perform his peculiar religious duties, by the substitution of another in his place, as the minister may; but, in each case, he whose duty it is to perform the family, or the public religious service, is responsible for that performance. So, also, in the character of *pastor*, it is his duty, when oppor-

tunity offers, to admonish, instruct, and pray in the families under his pastoral care ; but this does not generally happen at the time of the regular family devotion, and does not come in place of it at all.

The father, or head of the household, is now as much the priest of the domestic altar as was Abraham, or Job, or any of the patriarchs who thus officiated before the regular institution of congregational worship, and a distinct order of priesthood ; for the good reason, that congregational worship was not designed to supersede domestic, but to operate on a more extended scale of religious organization, to the highest efficiency of which, however, domestic worship is essentially necessary.

That the early, and elementary training of children, general and religious, should devolve on parents, is but the order of nature, and of God ; and it were about as reasonable to expect the necessary religious impressions, and principles of Christianity, to be received, and made permanent in the heart of the child, without the kindly influences of the family altar, as to expect like results in the congregation without the appointed ministrations of the sanctuary. And while a blessing always attends the right and faithful performance of this duty, and those families are most virtuous and happy—other things being equal—in which the coals never die on the domestic altar, the curse of heaven is pronounced on those “ families which (in their family character,) call not on the name of the Lord.”

Job offered faintly sacrifice for his family, and Daniel prayed in his house, and, we suppose, in his family, three times a day, and became stronger than the strength of lions. When the Wesleys felt themselves thrust out

to raise up a holy people, considering the tiresome formality, or total neglect of this duty, a great cause of the low state of vital piety in the Church, they provided that those who continue in these societies should be required to attend to the duty of family prayer. And there can be but little doubt, that the neglect of this duty—a neglect now too prevalent—is a cause of coldness and barrenness in many Churches, and in thousands of individuals holding membership in the Church of God.

In former times, when these excellent rules were more highly prized, and generally respected, than they seem to be at present by many of our people and preachers, it was customary to enforce this duty with great care and strictness. The minister, and the class leader, inquired of the members, individually, whether they attended to the duty of family prayer regularly; and, if any were found delinquent, every possible means were employed to bring them up to the point of duty, and the instances were rare in which the delinquent did not either reform or leave the Church. Then, the membership had the habit of prayer, and—almost of consequence—the spirit, and it was not matter of doubt with the minister, or leader, whether he could get one out of half a dozen old members called on, to pray in a prayer meeting, or class meeting, for it was not common to find a member who would not pray publicly when requested. Now the case is considerably different; but the fact that men who pray regularly in their families are now as available as then, indicates, with sufficient certainty, the cause of the falling off. The man who has no prayers for the benefit of his own family, has

not, and, it might also be added, cannot have, for the edification of the public.

All that has been said by ethical writers, and moral philosophers, in favor of the duty of public worship, as to its influence in elevating the tone of the moral affections, calling into action the power of social sympathy, teaching by the effective force of example, and the rest, applies, with all its strength, to family devotion.

Parents, by this means, not only improve their own religious feelings, and confidence, but give evidence to their household of their reverence for God and religion. In the public congregation, hundreds unite in the outward acts of devotion, but children soon come to look on this as matter of form, or, at best, external respect for the ordinances of religion, for there they see those they know to be irreligious, joining with others in the public services of the Church; but when they are called around the family altar, in the morning and evening sacrifices, they there see that religion is, with their parents, not merely a Sabbath and a congregational concern, but a matter of personal and daily attention, and serious interest.

In the congregation there may be temptation with the minister to make a fair exhibit of his powers, even while speaking to the Most High as a mouth for the assembly; but when that same minister comes to offer up himself, his wife, his children and servants, to God, in family devotion, there is left no room for display, and even Satan could hardly hope for the success of a temptation to pride, or vanity, thrown in to taint the family offering. Again: when a parent officiates as

priest of the domestic altar, he thereby makes such a declaration before his household, of his devotion to the service of God, as is well calculated to operate as a restraint on his words, tempers, and actions, and especially in their presence.

As to the proper time for attending to this duty, it is not sufficient, that the family altar have fire kindled on it on Sabbath morning, and then stand covered with cold ashes the rest of the week. The effects of this are, that the intervals of devotion are so long, that the spirit of the duty is lost, and it becomes irksome and spiritless, when it should be a delight; and besides, it leaves on the mind of the family an impression, that family religion is not a business of every day, but only a Sunday service. Morning and evening, of every day, should the Christian household unite in offering up their prayers and praises to the Father of Mercies, unless prevented by some providential hinderance. This has been the opinion, and the practice, of the wisest and holiest men.

But even in the instances in which the duty is regularly performed, we frequently meet with circumstances in the manner of performing it, which greatly tend to diminish the profitableness of the exercise. Some of these may be named, that they may be avoided.

1. Having morning prayer after breakfast, and when a portion of the family are impatient to scatter off to their respective vocations, and especially, in cases where they have to wait for a "second table," before prayer can be made. The first fruits of the day should be given to God, alike as matter of duty and con-

venience ; and, if not earlier, at least when the family are collected for breakfast, their united devotions should be offered up before the morning repast is taken.

2. Evening prayer is often delayed to so late an hour, that a portion of the family have either retired for the night, or are so drowsy, that attendance upon the duty is irksome and profitless. Indeed, some parents take no special care to have their younger children present, at the devotions of the family, seeming to forget, that one special object of the institution is the benefit of children.

3. Errors or mistakes in the manner of performing this duty, often defeat the object of it wholly, or in part, one of which is *tediousness*. We have seen a father devoutly seat himself at a late hour at night, or a hurrying time in the morning, and, surrounded with nodding auditors, or impatient ones, deliberately journey through a long chapter, a hymn, or psalm of uncommon length, and then a prayer corresponding. Such a course is calculated to deaden the fire and fervency of devotion in the leader of the exercise, and its common effect is to beget aversion in young minds to the whole exercise. Ordinarily, it is much better to read a short chapter, or even no more than eight to ten verses with emphasis, sing two or three well chosen verses of a hymn with life, and offer up a prayer full of energy, and solemn pathos, of not more than from five to eight minutes duration. It must be confessed, however, that this Pharisaic error is not the prevalent one of the age ; but,

4. A disposition to hurry through the service, with indecent haste, and lack of solemnity. Most improperly

both reading God's word, and singing his praise, are dispensed with, and without any preparatory exercise to compose the mind, and as it were, pave the way for the mind and heart, to the throne of grace. "Let us pray," calls the family suddenly, and in the midst of business thoughts and conversation, to their knees, to hear a few words uttered in hurried irreverence.

5. However well intended, and judiciously directed, the efforts of the father to render family devotion engaging and profitable, little success is likely to crown his efforts, unless they be faithfully supported, and co-operated in by the mother. If she manage to be not ready at the proper time; if the family have to wait to impatience her attendance; if she suggest, that the worship go on, and she will come when she can; or come not in at all, on some frivolous plea, and seem to take a reluctant part, and little, or no interest in the matter, she becomes "a millstone hanged about his neck." But, if with devout cheerfulness, she have all things ready for duty, place the books on the stand, call the family to order, and her husband to his duty as family priest, how is his burdened lightened, and how much more favorable the impression on the minds and hearts of all, than in the other case.

We have never known a family, as such, to turn out badly, where the parents had faithfully co-operated in the uniform, consistent, and constant practice and inculcation of family religion; and we have seldom, if ever, known an entire family to do well, in which this great auxiliary to virtue and piety was neglected, or very defectively performed. If our children are to become religious through our influence, they must see

the fruits of religion at home, and feel its warmth at the home altar. How inconsistently do we profess solicitude for the conversion of our households, when we care not enough about it, to even kindle up the extinguished coals on that altar which more than any other is designed to melt their hardness, and influence them to a pious life.

We, as a people, have lost much on this ground ; and there must be a mighty stirring up, and a sifting, a firm, mild carrying out of this rule, or what is lost cannot be regained.

“ PRIVATE PRAYER.”—As in public worship, we commune with the Most High, in unison with the assembly of worshippers, and in the family devotion, in connection with a household ; so, in private prayer, we commune with God alone, when no eye but His sees us, no ear but his hears, and all motive to hypocrisy, pride, or vanity, is excluded. In scarcely any other act of duty, can we be so fully confident of the sincerity and purity of our own motives. Such acts of piety as are known to God only, must be presumed to originate in principle alone, for there is not room for any other motive. One may act very honestly when in the eye of the world, or be munificent in alms-giving when seen of men, or pray eloquently when heard and admired by the multitude ; but, the integrity that is as scrupulous of justice when unseen by men, as in the thronged mart ; the charity that carefully conceals its acts from the world ; the prayer that seeks to be heard only by Him who can answer prayer ; these challenge our own confidence in the highest degree.

It would seem superfluous to quote either command, or example, to prove the obligation and benefits of this duty ; the sacred records abound in both, and few, even of rejectors of those records, deny the propriety of offering the secret breathings of the heart to God in humble confession, in supplication, and in thanksgiving. Prayer is the natural language of dependence, of contrition, and of gratitude ; it is the last resource of helplessness.

It is not enough that a mental prayer, or ejaculation, be offered occasionally, in the midst of our ordinary business and cares. This is, indeed, necessary, and strengthening, and should be often resorted to, in circumstances which admit of no other kind of prayer ; but it is not designed to come in place of secret prayer, properly so called, else would not Christ have said, “Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father who seeth in secret,” &c. An ejaculation can be offered without either entering the closet, or bowing the knee ; but when we retire for secret prayer, we are lead to feel, that we are there for the sole purpose of holding personal communion with the God who has promised to meet us there, and thoughts and feelings, solemn and devotional, are waked up almost necessarily by the impressive circumstances attending us. This duty should, so far as our circumstances will permit, be performed at stated, and regular periods. When opportunity offers, it is very proper for us to pray at other times also ; but, at least, the regular hour of secret prayer should be held sacred to that holy use, except only when providential hinderances interpose. One good effect of this course is, the

formation of a *habit* of secret devotion; so that when the fixed hour arrives, the soul hungers for its hidden manna, as the body demands its needed sustenance at the accustomed time. But, if we permit slight hindrances to keep us from our closet to-day, a less cause will probably be sufficient to turn us aside from duty to-morrow, and perhaps, in a short time, the hour can pass without our even thinking of the sacred uses to which we were wont to appropriate it. It is presumed, that, in a large proportion of the instances of backsliding—partial, or total—on the part of those who have once been right in faith, in experience, in religious *habits*, the first downward step was taken in neglecting regular, stated, closet devotion; the next, neglecting the closet entirely; then, as a consequence, the abandonment of family prayer; then, naturally, a disrelish for the duties of the house of God; when, soon, they become dry and withered branches, fit only for fuel of fire. True, there are some, now-a-days, who matriculate into the visible household of God, without erecting, before or afterwards, either a household altar, or a regularly consecrated closet; but, such cannot be relied on; they have not root in themselves, and, chilled by the first wind of adversity, or subdued by the first sunshine of prosperity, they wilt, and become things of rottenness and nought.

Christ's true disciples truly love private prayer, and none have just claims to that character who neglect the duty. This rule is in accordance with the teachings of the Lord, and was intended to be enforced. Its proper enforcement would, no doubt, eradicate from the vineyard many a barren and cumbersome fig tree; but it

would cause to spring up, in their stead, numerous young vines, of the Father's right hand planting, full of the sap of life, bearing rich clusters to the glory of God, and their end everlasting life.

“FASTING, OR ABSTINENCE.”—What God commands is right, because he commands it; yet the Most High, in many cases, condescends to bring down the reasons of his conduct to the comprehension of his creatures. A great source of error and delinquency, in human beings, is the ascendancy the animal nature is allowed to have over the moral. The indulgence of the animal appetites, to an inordinate extent, tends, directly, and surely, to that ruinous ascendancy of the mere animal over the immortal; hence strict temperance in eating, and drinking, is required by Christianity as indispensable to the true Christian character. It is known to all, that luxurious living—the free indulgence in the use of stimulating food and drinks—prepares the way for criminal excesses of various kinds, from which the strictly temperate are free. But temperance is not fasting, or abstinence, or, at most, is only abstinence from excess, which, though good and indispensable, is not precisely the thing here enjoined. By “fasting” is meant, an entire refraining, for a time, from ordinary food; and, by “abstinence,” reducing the quantity, or quality of food, below what we usually allow to ourselves. The effect of this is to hold the animal appetites in check, and use them in subordination to the higher attributes of our moral nature. And it is no small achievement, so to bridle the appetites, as to habituate them to control—to being kept under. Such control is

of great importance, as our religious stability and enjoyment are concerned ; and, if fasting or abstinence will aid us in gaining that control, we ought, by all means, to avail ourselves of them. This duty has been objected to, as being contrary to nature and reason. Contrary to nature it is, in a certain sense, because nature remonstrates against any restraint placed upon her appetites and desires. But if reason be designed to control and regulate the appetites—which otherwise would run to excess, and overturn the reign of reason—then, if this act of self-denial tends to strengthen that control of reason over appetite, even regarding man in his intellectual dignity, apart from his moral destiny, this duty is a strictly reasonable one. But we regard the duty proper and reasonable, even with respect to man's animal nature. In this land of abounding plenty, a large proportion of our people habitually take food in such quantity, and of such quality, as to overtask the digestive powers of the animal economy, consequences of which are dyspepsias, gouts, and many other diseases. Prudently to abstain, in part, from our usual food, lightens that task, and tends to invigorate those powers made weak by such overburdening. It is a fact, worthy of notice, that many of the most successful physicians prevent sickness in themselves by *abstinence*, and cure many of its attacks on them by *fasting*.

Thus is this neglected duty not only enjoined in the word of God, and in our General Rules, but is calculated, when rightly attended to, to benefit the moral, the intellectual, and the physical man ; and is supported by reason, and commended by the practice

of the most pious Christians, for its religious benefits, and by the most prudent for its physical advantages.

Perhaps no uniform rule can be laid down as to times of fasting, and the extent to which it should be carried. The choice between *fasting* and *abstinence* is here very properly left to the conscience and judgment of the Christian, for there are cases in which one might be proper, and the other—on account of the bodily state of the subject—inexpedient; but in all, or nearly all cases, either the one or the other would be proper and profitable. Members of bands were required, by voluntary agreement, to fast once a week; but our Church has thought it proper, only to prescribe to the membership, in any thing like positive form, a fast on the Friday immediately preceding each quarterly meeting. By this is not intended a doing of penance, by which we may atone for our sins, or errors, and purchase pardon; but an humbling of ourselves before God, all as with one consent, that so we may be prepared to expect and receive a great blessing on the Church, when we meet to enjoy the quarterly feast of grace. If, where two or three agree in a petition to God it shall be granted, where many agree to humble and chasten themselves, that the sins of the Church may be forgiven, and the blessing of God may be poured into her bosom, we have good reason to expect the giving of a blessing. And when this pious custom was nearly universal among us, when all fasted and prayed for a special blessing on the quarterly meetings, it is well known, that those occasions were generally marked by wonderful displays of the gracious power of the Lord. There is, however, in this duty, too much

of self-denial, and mortifying of the body, to allow it to be popular, or even acceptable, to carnal, self-indulgent professors. Among the purer salt of the earth something of this duty—to which Christ attached much importance by example and precept—may be found still, but the neglect of it has become quite too general.

Unfashionable as fasting has become, it was not only the custom of God's ancient people, individually to observe this duty, but, both under the old and new dispensations, they made it a point to fast on special occasions, particularly when the prosperity of their Church, or nation, was concerned, or put in peril.

For example :—

1. On the approach of enemies ; 2 Chron. xx. 3, “And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.”

2. When threatened with destruction ; Esther iv. 3, “And in every province whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing ; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.”

3. After defeat by enemies, that they might suitably repent and humble themselves for national sins, and recover the favor and help of God ; Josh. vii. 6, “And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. Judg. xx. 26, “Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord.” 1 Sam. xxxi. 13,

“And they took their bones and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.” 2 Sam. i. 12, “And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.”

4. On the threatening of judgments and other critical occasions; 1 Kings xxi. 27, “And it came to pass, when Ahab heard these words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.” Jonah iii. 5-7, “So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water.” Dan. ix. 3, “And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.” Ezra viii. 21-23, “Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king, a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we

fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us." Neh. ix. 1, "Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month, the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them."

5. Christ fasted when about entering upon his public ministry; Matt. iv. 2, "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungered."

6. The apostles and Church fasted when about to ordain ministers to serve the Church; Acts xiv. 23, "And when they had ordained them elders in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. Acts xiii. 2, 3, "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Cornelius, when in doubt what to do for himself and his Gentile friends fasted, and divine direction was given; Acts x. 30, "And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing."

Fasting has been perverted from its intended use, but this is not an argument against the duty itself, which is commanded of God, and profitable to those who use it according to the order of the Most High.

Having now passed through this short but comprehensive and moral code, there is left only the brief concluding paragraph, which reads as follows:—

“These are the general rules of our societies: all which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul, as they who must give an account. We admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But if then he repent not, he hath no place among us. We have delivered our own souls.”

On this paragraph we have but a few words to offer. It is asserted of these rules, 1. That they are all taught of God in His written word. 2. That word is the only sufficient rule of faith and practice. 3. That the Spirit of God writes these rules of his word on truly awakened hearts. 4. Such being their authority, if there be any of our members who habitually break any of them, such cases should be made known to the pastor of such delinquents, whose duty it is to attempt their reformation by *admonition*; but if the transgression be persisted in, they are to be cut off from the society.

These are all points of importance, and might be greatly enlarged on, but we forbear.

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